

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

CHRISTMAS ISSUE



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Christmas 1997

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Thailand

What's Cooking?

Add a touch of spice to life by mastering the art of Thai cuisine with a top chef at one of the country's many luxurious cooking schools.

Thai food ranks as one of the world's great culinary arts. Today, restaurants serving Thai dishes are springing up throughout the globe and the cuisine has earned a deserved reputation for its creativity, variety and, of course, superb taste. Fragrant lemon grass and kaffir lime leaves are now standard ingredients for any inventive chef, anywhere. And how better to learn than by spending a few days in the company of Thailand's top chefs? The new international taste for Thailand has bred a host of luxurious cooking schools: many people now visit the country primarily to study Thai cuisine. One of the first such courses, in a traditional wooden house at the Oriental Hotel, is now into its hugely successful second decade. Like The Landmark Hotel and Rose Garden

Country Resort it offers classes interspersed with city tours to markets and other places of foodie interest. Classes specialising in regional cuisine are found elsewhere in the country, such as the Chiang Mai Thai Cookery School. Such courses attract a huge range of students, from professional chefs to housewives, and may last for a half day or up to two weeks.

Thai food is particularly healthy, and special food fairs are planned for 1998 to highlight this, including instruction in the use of herbs in Thai dishes. "Thai Food for the World" is the theme of the country's annual food conference, to be held every April from 1998; this is reinforced by regional Thai food promotions.

For further information and a booklet containing full details of courses available, please contact the number below.



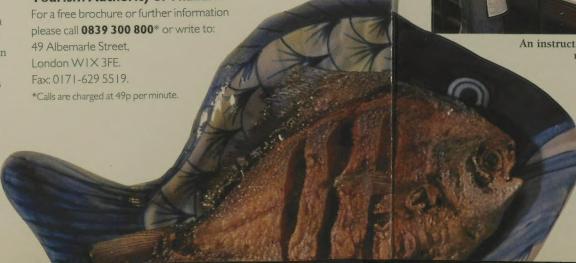
Tourism Authority of Thailand

For a free brochure or further information please call **0839 300 800*** or write to:

49 Albemarle Street,
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Fax: 0171-629 5519.

*Calls are charged at 49p per minute.



An essential ingredient of Thai cuisine, the delicate art of fruit carving.



An instructor at the Oriental Hotel in Bangkok reveals culinary secrets. Traditional vegetable carving, far left, is also taught as part of the course.

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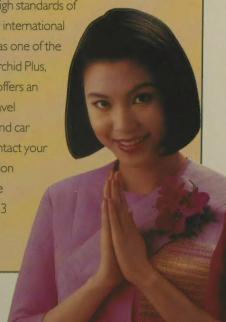
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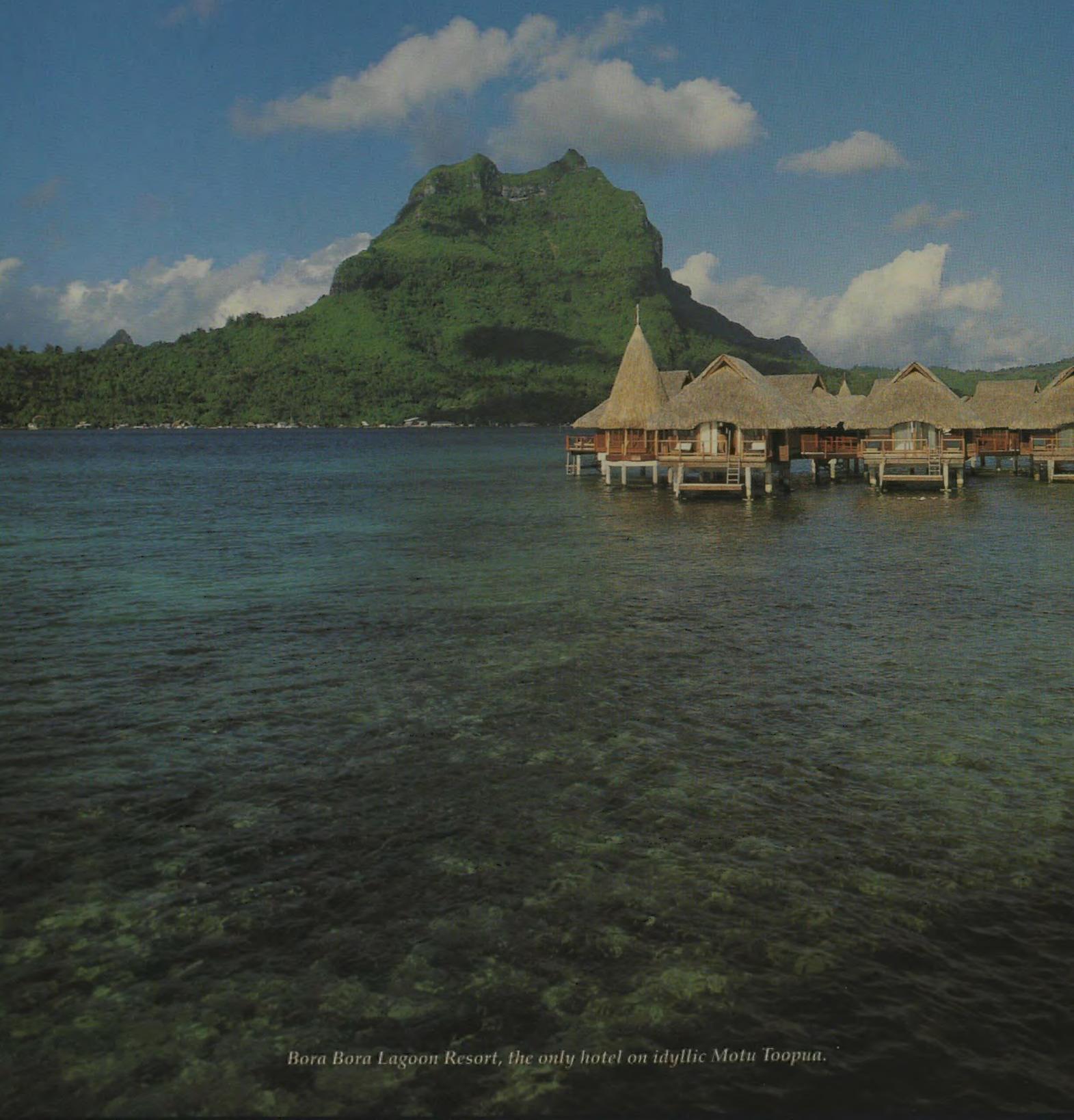
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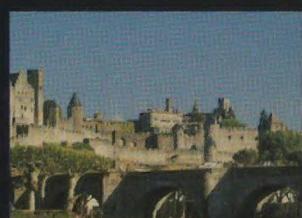
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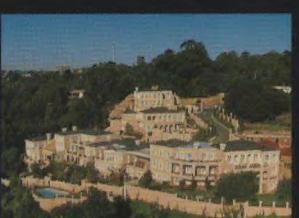
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*Cover illustration
by Satoshi Kambayashi.*

*Left, a Picasso lithograph would make a special gift for a special person.
Page 24.*

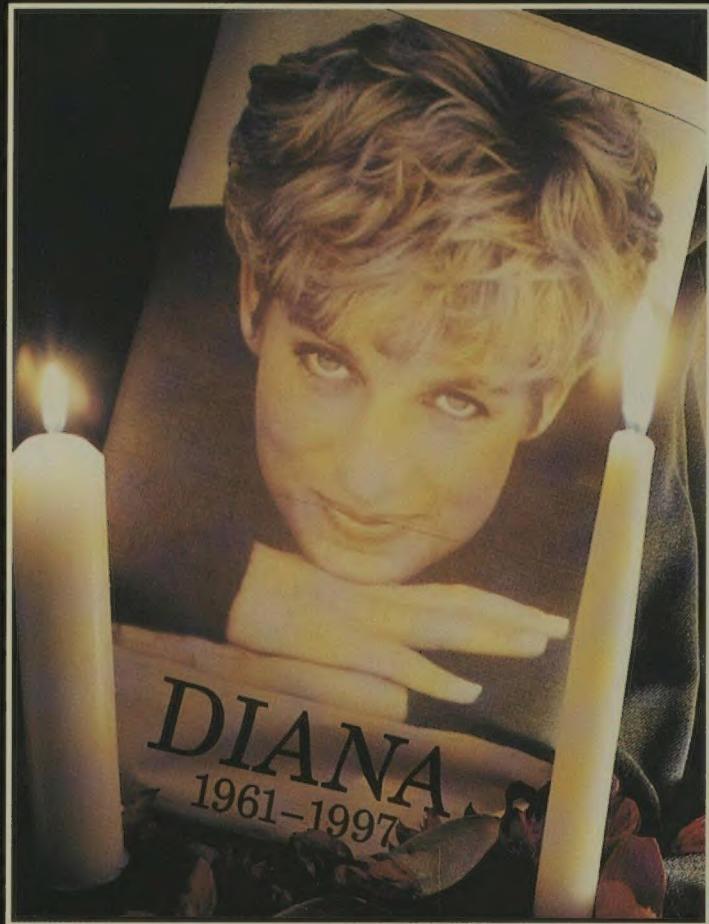
Below, Henrietta Green tells you about speciality foods that can be delivered to your door. Page 46.



*Above, English National Ballet's latest staging of *The Nutcracker* combines contemporary glitz with traditional romance. Page 18.*

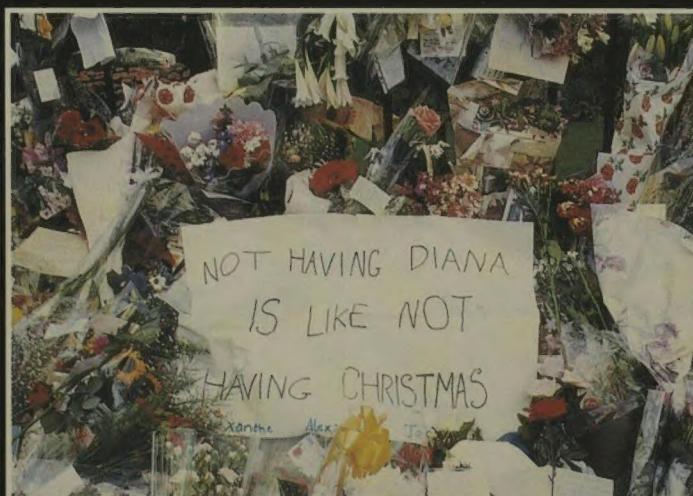
Right, Sir Terence Conran is one of the trend-setters in the new craze for cigars. Page 30.





Remembering Diana

A TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES





CHIRSTMAS is, essentially, a religious celebration, but it is also a time for reflection on the year drawing to a close. For so many of us, the defining moment of 1997 was when we awoke on the last day of August to news that was scarcely believable: that the Princess of Wales had been killed in Paris.

A week later we were left with memories of a silence stilling central London, broken only by the tolling of the muffled bell of Westminster Abbey. Perhaps the strongest image of the funeral was not the crowds of mourners or the oceans of flowers brought in tribute, but the simple card set on her coffin by her son Harry. Our thoughts are with him and his brother as they face their first Christmas without their mother.

LONDON LIGHTHOUSE

Photograph previous page

"Everyone at London Lighthouse is devastated by the death of a very special person. Diana was a warm, generous human being, who brought a genuine sense of humanity and connectedness to the charitable causes she supported."

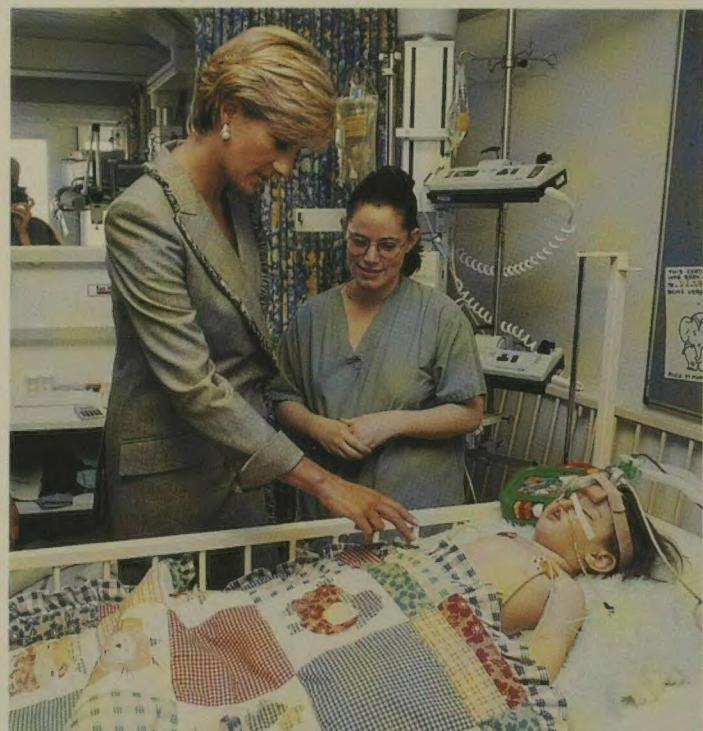
"London Lighthouse felt especially privileged because Diana was not our patron. In fact the majority of visits she made to the Lighthouse were private—often unannounced.

"Diana was involved with AIDS, because she wanted to support people who were perhaps vulnerable, isolated or felt unconnected with mainstream society. She made each individual affected by HIV and AIDS feel special, while making it all seem so normal.

"Diana's last high-profile visit was to launch the Lighthouse Capital Appeal in October 1996, but she continued to maintain her association with the Lighthouse and a private visit was being arranged for September."

London Lighthouse spokesperson

"What Diana was able to achieve on behalf of myself and countless others marginalised by society



Visiting the paediatric intensive care unit at St Mary's Hospital in April 1997.

cannot be over-estimated. She was a beacon of light in many people's lives, including my own. On the occasions when I met her it was like being with an old friend. I am very, very saddened that we shall never see her again.

Outside Diana's family and friends, those who will most strongly feel a gap in their lives this Christmas are the charities to whom she brilliantly drew attention. Speaking to those who worked with her, it is clear that their feelings go far beyond the loss of a dazzling fund-raiser. Diana was unique in the way she combined personal allure with an ability to form a bond with those in difficulty or distress, no matter how brief the time she spent with them.

As a small tribute to the princess, we have gathered here a collection of images recording her work for various good causes, whose staff explain in their own words how she will be missed this Christmas. We also hope that they will serve as a reminder of many happy and special occasions.

CENTREPOINT

"It was an honour to represent the loss felt by so many of the homeless young people Centrepoint sees. Having spoken to staff in our hostels, I know that the mood among the young people during the funeral reflected that of the nation: quiet, reflective and calm. Diana was always so caring and concerned for homeless young people and many others in distress. We will miss her very much."

Victor Adebawale, Chief Executive, who attended the funeral.

"It was a very moving experience. The silence was overwhelming. The only sounds were the sobs of the crowd and the sound of our feet walking. Although it was a very public occasion, there was a real sense of private grief."

Megan Johnson, Centrepoint's Director of Services, who walked in the procession.

Princess Diana was an active supporter of Centrepoint's youth homelessness work for six years, four of those as Patron. Centrepoint has set up its own special memorial fund and any donations received in memory of the Princess will be used to help homeless young people in the future. Call 0800 232320.

I sincerely hope that everyone will reflect upon this sudden tragic loss and that our society will become more compassionate and inclusive as a result of her life—and her untimely sacrifice."

Paul, Service User

To make a donation to London Lighthouse, call Tara Treacy on 0171-792 1200.

ENGLISH NATIONAL BALLET

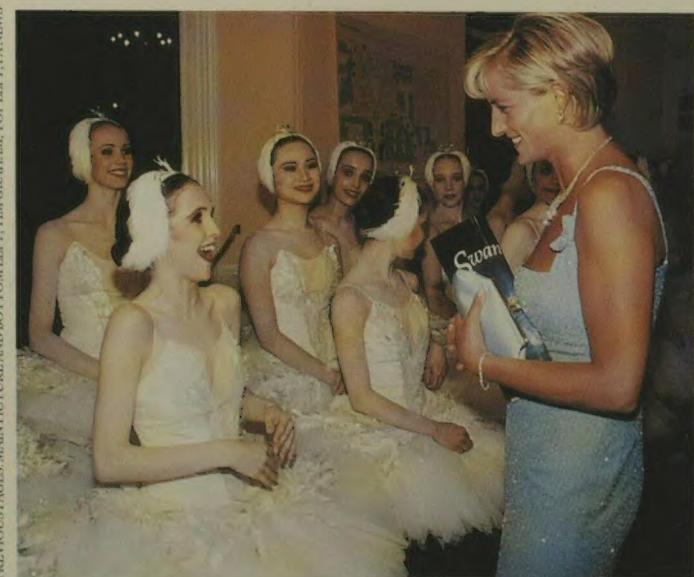
"Our Patron, Diana, Princess of Wales, was a tireless supporter of our work for most of the 1990s. Her continuing support both in the public glare and in private was immeasurable. There were those who only saw the Princess at a special event or at a Gala performance. There are others who know that she took a real and committed interest in our dancers' lives, listening to their problems and helping where she could, and working for us in a real and practical way behind the scenes."

"The eyes of the whole world turned on English National Ballet in August 1996 when she chose to fulfil a long-standing commitment to visit the Company on the day of her divorce. That she should have chosen to undertake that obligation on that day was a testament to her outstanding professionalism. It was that wonderful professionalism that characterised the relationship we had with her."

"The nation grieves for the loss of such an extraordinary woman, and English National Ballet mourns the death of our greatest ambassador, our staunchest ally and one of our finest friends."

Pamela, Lady Harlech, Chairman of the English National Ballet

Donations to Neroli Hobbins, Development Director, English National Ballet, Markova House, 39 Jay Mews, London SW7 2ES.



GREAT ORMOND STREET

"Diana, Princess of Wales was committed to her work at Great Ormond Street for over ten years. In 1989 she became President of the hospital and made numerous visits both publicly and privately. Her love for the children here will be greatly missed."

Robert Creighton, Chief Executive

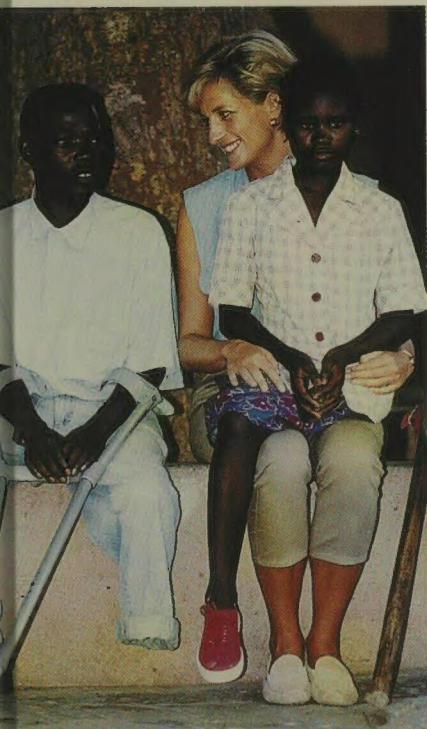
Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital Christmas Appeal line: 0171-916 5678.

BRITISH RED CROSS

"Diana, Princess of Wales was able to make a very significant contribution to the Anti-Personnel Landmines Campaign by successfully combining her natural caring skills with the ability to utilise the media to highlight the effects of such weapons around the world. She had tremendous warmth and compassion for human suffering and brought enormous hope and support to the lives of many victims."

Credit card donations line: 0345 315315. Cheques should be sent to Anti-Personnel Landmines Campaign, The British Red Cross, 9 Grosvenor Crescent, London SW1X 7EJ.

PHOTOGRAPHERS INTERNATIONAL



TIM GRAHAM

In Angola, with young victims of landmines in January this year.

NATIONAL AIDS TRUST

"The loss of Princess Diana is obviously utterly devastating, and although it is now over two months since she died, the staff and volunteers still view this event with some disbelief. She was the

foremost ambassador for AIDS and HIV in the world and what we need to do now is to find a new champion for HIV who will be able to carry on the sustained kind of work that Princess Diana did."

Gavin Hart, Press Officer

Credit card donation line: 0171-814 6746. Cheques made payable to The National Aids Trust Princess Diana Fund, can be sent to The National Aids Trust, New City Cloisters, 188-196 Old St, London EC1V 9FR.

THE EVELINA CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL APPEAL

"Trish and I felt it was a great honour to represent the Evelina Children's Department at Princess Diana's funeral. We will never forget that day. As we followed the gun carriage we were aware of the silent crowds, only hearing the horses' hooves, the roll of the gun carriage wheels and the footsteps of others in the procession. Our thoughts went back to the day we met the Princess. The pleasure this visit gave was immense and all who met her will never forget her warmth and kindness."

Geraldine Taylor, Children's Services Manager, and Trish Kenney, Sister on Rothschild at Guy's Hospital, who followed the gun carriage at the funeral.
Donation and information line on 0171-378 7555.

THE LEPROSY MISSION

"Diana really did three things for us." Firstly she helped tremendously in removing the stigma from leprosy. By visiting our hospitals in India, Nepal and Indonesia she did much to dispel the myth and ignorance that surrounds leprosy, much in the same way as she did with AIDS.

Secondly, she really helped to highlight leprosy as a real world problem. Too often leprosy is seen as an almost biblical disease, and it is not. There are some 1.5 million lepers in India alone today.

And last but by no means least, she helped to raise a great deal of money. For example at a private lunch earlier this year hundreds of thousands of pounds was pledged. Whether the cameras were on her or not, and often they were not, Diana always behaved with total commitment."

Nigel Slater, Director of Fundraising

Princess Diana was Patron of The Leprosy Mission from 1990 and launched the Countdown to Cure campaign to raise funding and support to bring leprosy under control (less than 1 case per 10,000) by the year 2000. For information about Countdown to Cure, contact The Leprosy Mission, Goldhay Way, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough PE2 5GZ Tel: 01733 370505.

Early days: outside Great Ormond Street Hospital in December 1982.

RELATE

"Princess Diana understood very quickly the nature of couple counselling. She was a very warm and empathic person and we were delighted to have her as our Patron. We are shattered and saddened by her death and can only imagine the sadness that this has brought to her family."

Julia Coles, Press Officer

To make a donation, call Mark Rawden on 01788 563801 or Paul Rees on 01788 563802.

BARNARDOS

"Princess Diana's commitment to Barnardos was exceptional. She trusted the charity and undertook several 'firsts' with us—her first major speech, her first business meeting, her first private, unannounced visit.

Many of us experienced at first hand her strong personal commitment to the most vulnerable people; her ability to form trusting relationships; and her capacity to understand both that which was within and outside her personal experience."

Roger Singleton, Senior Director

The Princess was President of Barnardos from November 1984 until July 1996. During that time she attended over 110 Barnardos events. Although Diana formally withdrew her patronage last year, she maintained a personal contact with Barnardos. Barnardos information and donation line: 0800 122822.

COMPILED BY FIONA FERGUSON



At the Dorchester Hotel for the Barnardos Champion Children Awards in 1993.

Holiday on Ice



PHOTOGRAPH BY

In Lapland's unique and frosty Ice Hotel you can eat, drink, be merry, and, yes, even sleep!—surrounded by sparkling ice.

Works of art carved from shimmering blocks of ice adorn the pillared hall in the Ice Hotel, above. Weddings and christenings can be arranged in the ethereally beautiful ice chapel, below.

North of the Arctic Circle in Swedish Lapland lies Europe's largest area of real wilderness, a land made mystical by the aurora borealis, the midnight sun and vast stretches of untouched snow. The best way—indeed the only way—to experience this snowy kingdom is at the Ice Hotel at Jukkasjärvi, near Kiruna.

The Ice Hotel is just what it says. It is built purely of ice and snow, with ice furnishings and artworks. Guests can sit in the ice chapel, drink at the Absolut Ice bar, watch a slide show in the ice cinema and even take an ice sauna. At night, they can curl up under a heap of reindeer skins on their ice

mattresses and go to sleep in temperatures of between -3°C and -8°C.

The hotel was the brainchild of the current manager, Yngve Bergqvist, a patron of local art. "I already managed a small hotel in Jukkasjärvi, where we used to put on exhibitions," he says. "I've always been interested in art which uses our natural resources, and I wanted to create a new, unusual venue for shows." That winter he and a friend, Pär Granlund, built an igloo-shaped Arctic Hall which they filled with artworks. Bergqvist then decided to expand on the idea, and the Ice Hotel of today was born.

A building of eerie, almost ethereal beauty, the Ice Hotel has floor, ceiling

and walls of snow, but the bar, windows, pillars, furniture and sculptures are all carved in crystal-clear ice. The effect of the light reflecting on it is like that of sunlight on cut crystal: the whole interior seems to glow and sparkle.

Construction of the hotel starts in the middle of October and takes about four weeks. Steel frames are used to provide the shape, which consists of a giant igloo containing 50 smaller igloos which are the bedrooms. Snow and water is packed on to the frames and cold air is blown on to the structure to freeze it solid. After two days the frames are taken away, leaving only ice and snow. In total, 5,000 tonnes of snow and 3,000 tonnes of ice are used. Funnily enough, the snow is made by machine; the ice, however, comes from the nearby Torne river.

With its 50 igloos, the hotel accommodates up to 100 people. Last winter more than 3,000 guests braved its sub-zero temperatures. Most can usually stomach just one night (although state-of-the-art sleeping bags withstand temperatures of up to -35°C are provided!); the rest of the time guests can stay in wooden cabins. Showers and a restaurant are also found in a nearby wooden building.

Those who don't stay overnight come simply to look at the architecture and the art, see a slide-show of the Northern Lights, and have a drink at the bar. In the ice sauna, reindeer skins line the frozen benches; remarkably, even the sauna's searing heat





AIR MAURITIUS

Non Stop Caring

It's the little things
that count





Blocks of river ice that is as clear as the purest glass are used for the supporting pillars, chairs and tables in the Absolut Ice bar, above. Reindeer skins and sleeping bags are supplied in the bedrooms, below, where even the chandelier is made from ice. Right, the biggest igloo in the world.

does not melt the ice. At the ice chapel weddings and christenings can be arranged, with the one proviso that any baby being christened must have the word "is" (Swedish for ice) in its name; hence plenty of Isaks, Dorises and Isabellas have been doused in holy water here.

Art still plays an important part: the increasingly popular genre of ice sculpture finds its perfect showcase here. Five or six artists come each year to create works, including Barbro Behm, who lives in nearby Kiruna. This year Arne Bergh and Ake Larsson will also be contributing.

Once guests have soaked up the unique atmosphere of the Ice Hotel, it's time to get out and about exploring Lapland's natural assets. They can hire a snow-scooter to travel over frozen lakes and through snowy pine forests, or take a dog-sleigh ride with the famous huskies. There is, of course, plenty of skiing to be done. Eight rivers, the finest of which is the



Torne, can be navigated by river raft, and, for fortune-hunters, there are lessons in gold-digging.

The Ice Hotel stands until the beginning of June when it melts into the ground. The area remains empty until October, when the winter wonderland is created all over again.

JULIA PEARLEY

□ The Ice Hotel, Jukkas AB, Marknads-vägen 63, S-98191 Jukkasjärvi, Sweden. Tel: 46 980 66 890; fax 46 980 21 406. £47 per person per night. Scandinavian Airlines flies from London, Heathrow to Kiruna via Stockholm daily. Prices start at £220 to Stockholm, and from £300 to Kiruna. Tel: 0171-734 4020.



STOCKHOLM: CULTURE IN A COLD CLIMATE

If you can't make it to the Ice Hotel, an Ice Pavilion is being erected in Stockholm's Kungsträdgården park in time for the start of Stockholm '98. The pavilion will be about 200 square metres in size and will be furnished with ice bars, counters and chairs, as well as ice sculptures. Five or six experienced builders from Jukkasjärvi will carry out the work using ice brought down from Lapland. Snow will be supplied by snow cannons in Stockholm, but if the temperature climbs above freezing, more can be shipped in from northern Sweden. The artists exhibiting in the pavilion will be approaching their material from a conceptual standpoint.

Stockholm has been chosen as the 14th Cultural Capital of Europe, and more than 600 events will be taking place. Fifteen core themes include Stockholm's history, its waterways (the city is built on 14 islands), the environment, traditions and the creativity of its people, illustrated via architecture, design, performing arts, photography and literature.



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THE CHEVAL GROUP OF SERVICED APARTMENTS

Ring in the Changes

An executive Lord Mayor for London could be just a referendum away: we ask a cast of prominent personalities how, were they to be elected, they would change Christmas in the capital.

Compiled by Deirdre Shields.

The story of Dick Whittington (not forgetting his faithful cat), and how he turned again to become Lord Mayor of London, is as familiar as the plot of any Christmas pantomime. London is the oldest municipal corporation in the world, having established the right to vote just before King John signed the Magna Carta. Roger Fitz Alan became the first mayor in the 13th century, although the title was not used until the 16th century.

However, the Lord Mayor—he of the tricorn hat in the Mansion House—is no more than the leading Alderman in the City of London. Real power looks set to lie with the elected mayor, a new position which the Government has proposed. Londoners will have the chance to vote on this proposal in a referendum next May, and the first executive mayor could be elected in 2000.

While a mayor and his (or her) assembly's power and funding are being debated, it will be the biggest change in London's government since the Greater London Council was dismissed in 1986—as if with a swipe of Lady Thatcher's handbag. The mayor would hold one of the highest profile public jobs in Britain, representing an electorate of some five million people.

In festive spirit, we asked some of those whom pundits have suggested for the position among them, Lord Archer, Margaret Hodge MP, Steven

Norris, Michael Cassidy and Trevor Phillips—along with other well-known Londoners, what they would do if they were mayor (or, in case they were too modest to aspire to the role themselves, what they would like to see a new mayor do) to improve Christmas in the capital?



Rabbi Lionel Blue

Broadcaster and writer

One of the things that immediately comes to mind would be to try to give all the minorities—Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, everyone—something to celebrate at Christmas. I know some nuns who hold a non-Christmas party, complete with non-Christmas crackers and non-Christmas songs. I think those who are not Christians can feel very left out at Christmas, and it would be good to find a way to include them. Perhaps people who don't go along to church at Christmas could offer to do something practical for those who do—help with the

cooking, or take the dog out for a walk, so that different religious and ethnic groups can help each other out. And why don't we give everyone a present for one or two days during the holiday, by ensuring there would be no entrance fee at all for museums and galleries? It would be marvellous to

"Hold a big variety show in the Albert Hall for all those who have nowhere to go for Christmas."

have one day of free entry to London's history and heritage.

Each year we could focus on one charity all Londoners could contribute to. It could be a London-based charity—tackling the problems of the capital's homeless, for example. Londoners could vote, through the radio, on who they would like to help, choosing a different charity every Christmas. I think people truly want to show generosity, but often they don't know what to do.

Christmas can be the loneliest time of all, but church ministers could help by putting single people in touch with one another for Christmas, so they could form a Christmas lunch club. Even if they discovered that they didn't like each other, they would only have to endure it for one day!



Jancis Robinson

Wine writer, broadcaster

I think there should be heavy investment in the tube (especially the Northern Line), and good musical performances from buskers and classical musicians should be actively encouraged in all the stations.



Sue MacGregor

Presenter, Radio 4's Today programme

I feel that the Christmas lights in Oxford and Regent Street are pathetic compared with other capitals such as Paris and New York, which are much prettier. They look as if very little money has been spent on them, although I'm sure it has, and they attract people to an already congested area. The result is that you get people driving down Regent Street with the kids in the back, just toddling along causing havoc. I'm not a killjoy, it's just that I think the whole thing should be moved and



improved—perhaps along either side of Park Lane: you could have a brilliant display, maybe with a tree and other jollities, at Hyde Park Corner, where there's a huge amount of space. It would take the dreadful traffic jams away from an important shopping area—the shop windows already provide sufficient decoration. They should spend more money on the lights and make them more attractive for everyone. In fact, I would send out an edict immediately!



Jeffrey Archer (*The Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare*)

Novelist, politician

I have always voted against entrance charges at public museums and galleries—both as a member of the GLC and as a Member of Parliament. We should aim to get rid of them altogether but, in the meantime, why not lift all charges for the week leading up to Christmas? That would be a present for all Londoners.



Margaret Hodge

MP (Labour) for Barking

We should add support to the charities that work for the homeless, throw a huge children's party, perhaps inviting two children from each of London's primary/infant schools, and hold a big variety show in the Albert Hall for anyone who feels they have nowhere to go on Christmas Day.



Steven Norris

Director General of the Road Haulage Association, former Conservative minister

I'm a pragmatist. We can all promise a world free of pain and grief, but I would like to do it in a practical way. First of all I would aim to lessen accidents in the capital between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day by making the buses and tubes absolutely free, and ensuring that they run all through the night. It is a tragedy that so many Londoners are killed over the Christmas season because of drink-drive

accidents. We've just stuck our toe in the water over this, but we've not done enough—we must turn the public transport tap on. There wouldn't be a great loss in revenue, because most people who have travel cards would already have bought them, and there isn't much incidental business around that time. It would all be part of a big advertisement—and the message would be, please don't drive in the capital over Christmas.



Barry Norman

Film critic and presenter

I see that certain cinemas are planning to open on Christmas Day for the first time, and I would support this. Christmas can be a misery for people who are alone, and I feel that, especially in London, this is an idea worth developing. It would give people some companionship. But only if volunteers could be found who were willing to work—I wouldn't want the employees to be forced to come in on Christmas Day.



Trevor Phillips

TV producer and presenter of The London Programme

On one day after Christmas, maybe Boxing Day, I would stop all traffic entering central London, and hold the biggest children's Christmas party in the world. It could attract up to a million people, all of whom would walk into the centre from the tube. I'd get two or three big fair contractors in, and fill the parks and squares with Ferris wheels, street performers and buskers. Some of the big shops could put on displays, (but there would be nothing for sale!). It would just be a fun, fantastic event—with plenty of snow, of course.



Ned Sherrin

Writer, broadcaster

I don't think that Christmas really needs any improving in London. It's been going since Dickens—and if it ain't broke, don't fix it.



John Julius Norwich

(Viscount Norwich)

Writer, historian

I would like to have a moratorium put on all Christmas lights, decorations and,

above all, carols before December 15. Christmas is meant to last only twelve days, after all!



Michael Cassidy

Barrister, former chairman of the Corporation of London's Policy and Resources committee

We should support Crisis at Christmas and other such good organisations, to make sure that the needs of our society's very poorest and deprived are met.



Theo Fennell

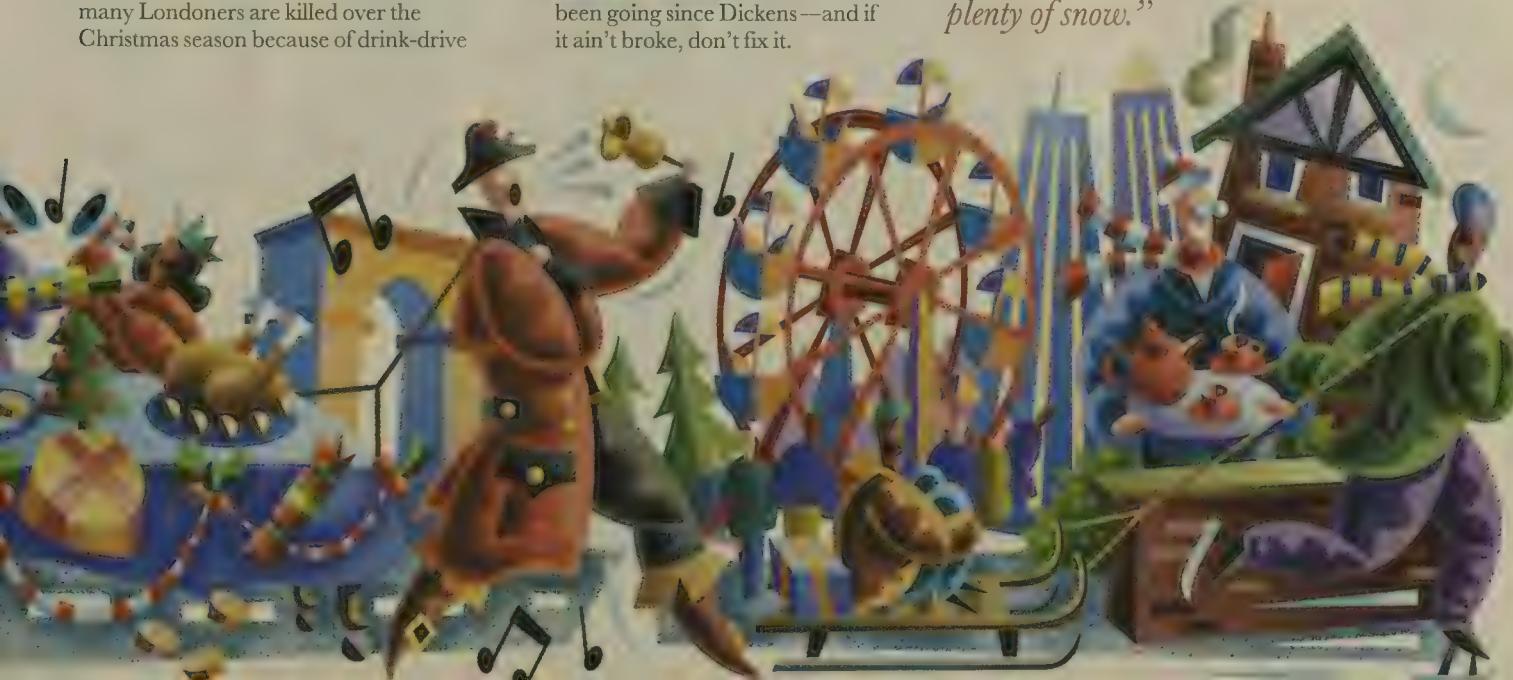
Owner of Theo Fennell jewellers

I would want a mayor to shut all the shops two days before Christmas, so that shop owners—and inveterate shoppers wouldn't end up getting home at midnight on Christmas Eve (as I have for the last 15 years!) That way everyone could have some time to soak up the atmosphere.

I would also like to see more public places opening on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, where people could wander round and enjoy themselves. One of the saddest things about Christmas in London is that you know there are so many people who are feeling lonely and miserable, and it would be good to produce some kind of entertainment, such as a concert or a fair which would allow them to join in and have some fun,

without being put under pressure, or feeling they're being condescended to. Perhaps I could go along and give them a song or two—a captive audience at last!

"Fill the parks and squares with Ferris wheels, street performers, buskers and plenty of snow."



Audiences at English National Ballet's new Nutcracker, created by Derek Deane, may be surprised by the glitzy modern setting of the prologue, with partygoers sporting chic little back numbers, but they will not be deprived of the traditional enchantment of Clara's fantasy dream-world.



This Christmas
The Nutcracker acquires
a racy new guise.
Christopher Bowen
explores the
ballet's perennial
popularity.

Cracking ENTERTAINMENT





The two little girls skipped into the subway car, cuddling up to their mother among voluminous layers of emerald-coloured party clothes. "And the tree just grew and grew," exclaimed the younger one, tiny black patent pumps beating out a tattoo against her seat.

"But the snow fairies are best," interrupted her big sister, nodding to a picture in the programme as her legs stretched out, 10 tiny toes straining to be en pointe.

"You kids been to the ballet?" chimed in the burly bear of a man sitting opposite. "Was it good?"

"Yes," came the response in chorus, "It was *The Nutcracker*. We go every year."

It was a conversation that could have happened in London, Los Angeles or any one of 100 cities around the world. As it happens, it took place in New York, as 2,000 ballet fans emerged from George Balanchine's production of *The Nutcracker* at the Lincoln Center.

To me, the experience had come as something of a surprise. New York is still—arguably—the dance capital of the world, and New York City Ballet, its flagship company, has inherited the world's most challenging and intellectually stimulating neo-classical repertoire. Yet *The Nutcracker*, with its flimsy plot about a girl who falls asleep after a Christmas Eve party and dreams her nutcracker doll comes to life, and its cutesy second-act suite of sugar-coated divertissements, is a ballet sophisticated Manhattanites seem to have taken to their hearts. Certainly audiences here have packed every performance since it was first staged in 1954, making it as much a part of the Christmas experience as skating at Rockefeller Center, drinking egg-nog or

checking out the window displays at Barneys and Saks Fifth Avenue.

But New York is not the only place with a fondness for this seasonal confection. Every Christmas some 250 different productions take place across America, from major league classical companies like Miami City and San Francisco Ballets, to rather dubious-sounding outfits like Barbi Lee Dance in Bloomington, Minnesota. While throughout Europe, where ballet companies first started to stage versions of *The Nutcracker* in the 1930s, the number of performances runs into four figures.

So what's the appeal?

According to Sir Peter Wright, former director of Birmingham Royal Ballet and choreographer of the current productions in both of Britain's royal companies, the very nature of the story almost dictates its popularity. "It really is the only seasonal ballet," he says. "*Cinderella* and *The Sleeping Beauty* have that fairytale, panto quality, but *Nutcracker* is the only classical work completely focused on Christmas. And it does have a wonderful score with some of the most ravishing ballet music ever written."

Walt Disney did much to foster mass appreciation of Tchaikovsky's score. In *Fantasia* his artists' interpretation of extracts from the *Nutcracker* Suite have dictated how several generations of filmgoers visualise the music. The Busby Berkeley patterns of waltzing flowers and shuffling steps of dancing mushrooms are indelible images.

But for many people *The Nutcracker* also represents a rite of passage, an introduction to the art of dance for children that is also much loved by parents. It is a family show, a ballet about magic and happiness and Christmas, which is why attending a performance is a scrupulously observed festive

Two traditional productions of The Nutcracker performed by English National Ballet: above, the snow scene from Peter Schaufuss' 1986 version; opposite, Agnes Oaks and Thomas Edur in Ben Stevenson's 1991 staging.

ritual for many families across the world.

In Britain that tradition has been most stoutly upheld by English National Ballet, whose annual performances of *The Nutcracker* at the Royal Festival Hall have introduced the world of classical dance to many generations. Since 1952 more than three million people have seen the various ENB (or London Festival Ballet, as it used to be known) productions. But last year the company took its final South Bank bow and will present its lavish new production of *The Nutcracker* on the rather more suitable stage of the Coliseum in London's West End. The venue may have altered but ENB artistic director Derek Deane sees no reason why the company should perform anything else at Christmas time. "I think it's a good tradition that doesn't need changing," he says. "What we do need to look at is the way we present the story."

The original ballet is adapted from a tale by E T A Hoffman. In it a young girl named Clara is given a nutcracker doll at a Christmas Eve party; later that night the doll comes to life to defend her in a Toyland battle against an army of mice. Having won, the nutcracker is transformed into a handsome prince who sweeps her off on a magic journey: first stop, the Kingdom of Snow. Here George Balanchine devised one of his most beautiful ensemble dances, the Waltz of the Snowflakes, in which the female corps de ballet mirror the crescendo





of Tchaikovsky's music in swirling patterns which build from a light flurry to a full-blown blizzard. Later, Clara and her young Prince journey to the Kingdom of Sweets, with its waltz of flowers and the Sugar Plum Fairy's climactic pas de deux. The ballet closes as the couple step into a sleigh and fly off into the night sky—or, depending on which version you see, Clara awakens from her astonishing dream.

That, more or less, is the standard plot common to most productions since the work was first staged by Lev Ivanov at the Maryinsky Theatre in St Petersburg in 1892. In his new version for English National Ballet, Deane has created a more modern environment for Clara and her family. "It begins with a very glitzy party," he says. "One of those events where everyone wears chic little black numbers and is trying to out-jewel everyone else."

"It is a very uncomfortable atmosphere for Clara," Deane explains. "Her father's mistress is at the party—uninvited and very obviously wearing red—and her mother is Prozac-ed out of her brain. It is from this unhappy, emotionally bereft environment that Clara is whisked to a place of hope and enchantment." And at the end? "Well, she's back where she started. But she has learned something."

Deane insists that surrounding this rather serious modern morality tale the magic of *The Nutcracker* will be dazzlingly realised and audiences will be assailed by every "ooh"-inspiring stage trick in the book. And he is certainly not the first to put a fresh spin on this seasonal favourite. Countless attempts have been made over the years to render the story more dramatic and to disguise, or even to elaborate upon, the schizophrenic split between the standard 19th-century presentation of "reality", and Clara's fantasy dream-world.

Both Rudolf Nureyev, first in Sweden in 1967 and then for the Royal Ballet in 1968, and Mikhail Baryshnikov for American Ballet Theatre in 1976, introduced adult themes and a Freudian interpretation of the relationship between Clara and Drosselmeier, the mystery man who presents her with the nutcracker. Many versions have Clara fall asleep after the party and dream her own transformation into a ballerina. In Frankfurt in 1971 John Neumeier carried this idea to its logical conclusion by revising the whole plot and making it a story about a ballet student, setting the second act in a pristine white dance studio. Yet another new scenario which picks up this theme is Graeme Murphy's, devised in 1996 for the Australian Ballet; here, Clara is an elderly Russian ballerina who is stranded in Australia at the start of World War II. Reminiscing and hallucinating about her life as a star of the Maryinsky Theatre in St Petersburg, she conjures images of the death of her lover, an Imperial officer during the Bolshevik Revolution.

Matthew Bourne, who caused a sensation with his 1995 all-male reinterpretation of *Swan Lake*, tackled his first classic Tchaikovsky ballet in 1992 when he presented a

Different angles . . .
on *The Nutcracker*:
right, John
Neumeier's version
for Royal Winnipeg
Ballet; below,
George Balanchine's
waltz of flowers;
bottom, Matthew
Bourne's prologue, set
in an orphanage.
Opposite, Mark
Morris' radical
update to the 1960s.



Nutcracker with an Oliver-meets-Annie storyline. Then, Clara spent a miserable first act in a dismal orphanage and escaped to Sweetieland with her Nutcracker Hunk, where skateboarding liquorice louts and bouffant marshmallows entertained.

But perhaps the most radical reinvention is Mark Morris's *The Hard Nut*, from 1991. Here, the ballet is updated to the 1960s—and a particularly tacky, lurid 60s at that, as conceptualised by horror-comic artist Charles Burns. In this suburban home from Hell, the vinyl furniture and white plastic Christmas tree have come straight from the local mall; the party guests are dressed in loon pants and push-up bras, and have bouffant hairdos. Much alcohol is consumed. And as for the family... Clara's mother has a pill problem, brother Fritz is a hideous little thug who terrorises the guests with a plastic submachine gun, and big sister Louise is a Nancy Sinatra lookalike in go-go boots. It is all deliciously vulgar—and it gets worse. In the midst of all this, little Clara stands out as a figure of innocence, solid as a rock despite the madness around her. Among all the outrageous partying, Morris reminds us that what we all need is love, a virtue that must sometimes be coaxed out of ugliness.

Few productions are as thoughtful—or so much fun—but then, the underlying reason for most stagings of *The Nutcracker* is financial. It is a huge money-spinner. As David Bintley, artistic director of Birmingham Royal Ballet (where Peter Wright's production has sold out every performance since its 1990 première) explains: "We play it for about two of the nine weeks we currently perform in the Hippodrome and it partly subsidises what we do during the rest of the year." Just as regional repertory theatre groups could not survive without the

annual panto, *The Nutcracker* shores up the artistic development of ballet companies.

And the phenomenon is not unique to Britain. Even among the swaying palms of South Beach, where Edward Villella's dynamic Miami City Ballet is based, George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker* (sic) plays a vital role in the company's existence. "Around 35,000 people see our performances of *The Nutcracker* in the four venues we regularly play," says the company's communications director, Vicki Vigorito. "And that represents around 35 per cent of our annual box office income. It might seem strange that such a traditional Christmas tale goes down so well in southern Florida, but even in this sunshine people adhere to mythical notions of what Christmas should look like—and that includes snowflake ballerinas!"

There is no escape. But millions of people around the world want it exactly that way. As the children in that subway car in New York seemed to suggest—a *Nutcracker* isn't just for Christmas, it's for ever.

□ See Listings for details of English National Ballet's *Nutcracker* performances in London.

THE ART OF GIVING

Why not give an original work of art for Christmas—it needn't break the bank. David Lee puts you in the picture.



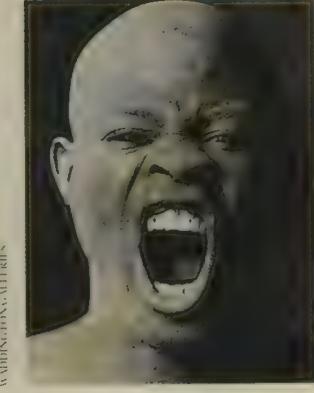
If we are to believe the extraordinary statistics of rising museum and gallery attendance, the number of buyers for art in the country is potentially enormous. People arriving in their millions at museums do not support weary old charges of élitism: the tens of thousands who not only look, but buy, at art fairs suggest that the Identikit art collector is no longer someone who winters in the South of France. Even if they have yet to realise it, most educated, working people are now in the market for buying original art, whereas only a few years ago to exhibit such an aspiration would have

been interpreted as brazen social climbing.

The challenge for commercial art galleries lies in convincing those who visit museums that acquiring art need not be painfully expensive and is also invariably great fun. It is necessary to convince only a small proportion of the seven million people who enter the British Museum, or the five million who visit the National Gallery, that buying art is not just for billionaires with bucks to burn for an art boom to take place. Few sights are more depressing than that of an expensively framed poster hanging on the kitchen wall of someone who had not realised that for the same price

they could have bought a distinctly more agreeable drawing or print from, say, Abbott and Holder in Museum Street. Ten minutes browsing through the plan chests of this tastefully dishevelled Aladdin's Cave and you'll be hooked. I can think of no better place to find a Christmas present for someone who will appreciate modesty and subtlety or, if you choose a Victorian caricature, a little acid (and perhaps risqué) wit.

After gruesome times earlier this decade, the art trade has revived in tandem with the general economic upturn. There are more galleries than ever before—over 700 of them in London alone—and most gallery

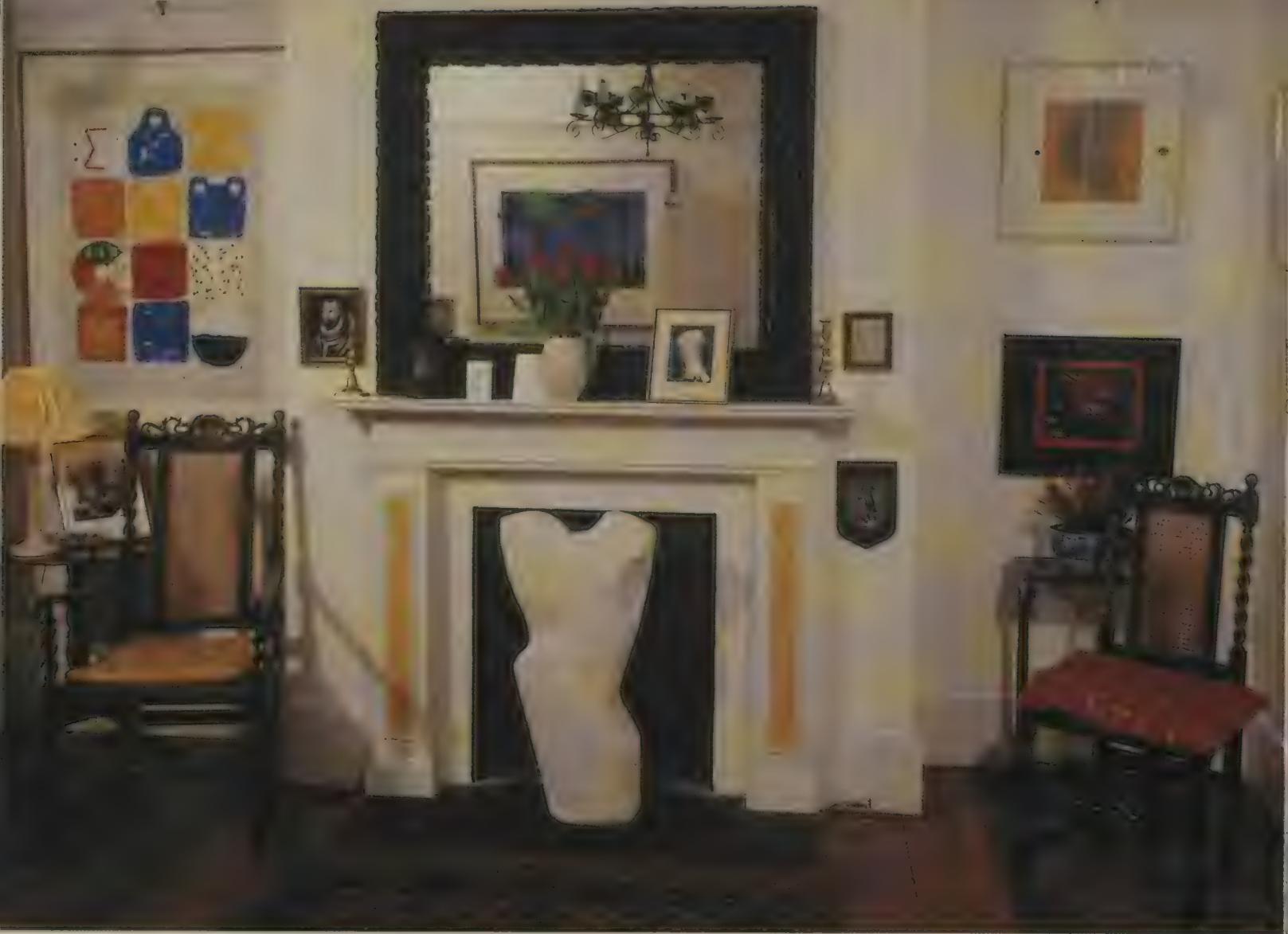


proprietors have never made more of an effort to woo first-time buyers with their cordiality and hospitality. Gone are the days when any gallery could afford to be snooty in its attitude to potential clients. Gone, also, are those times when most people were justified in feeling overwhelmed with shyness and embarrassment when entering a gallery, thanks to the hushed aura and a reception verging on the frosty. These days, galleries are distinctly unhaughty, prices are visible or willingly available on request and the reception is helpful without being pushy. Some gallery owners may still think they are a cut above

other street traders but, at its most fundamental, a gallery is a shop and however fashionably attired its owners they are still essentially shop assistants. Most galleries now make a visible effort to ensure that looking at art is made comfortable and relaxing, which may even extend to the offer of a cup of coffee or a glass of wine. Sensible dealers eschew the hard sell in preference for developing the tastes of buyers over the long term. Many galleries also offer easy payment terms staggered over as much as two years: buyers should never be afraid to enquire about flexible credit terms. The days are long past when gallery

Top, Harvey Nichols' Art Supermarket, with works from £150-£300, was an instant success. Prices to suit all pockets, from far left, Arthur Glenrie watercolour, £75; Reg Gammon oil, £2,500; Hockney lithographs, from £750. Above, left to right, Art Space has contemporary work from £200; Thirza Kotzen, collage, £495; Picasso lithograph £1,100; Wiseman Originals; The Special Photographers Company has original prints from £100.

owners expect all their customers to produce a cheque on the spot. Additionally, certain galleries will allow clients to take a work home on approval. Many dealers are specialists who respond to a good eye and a



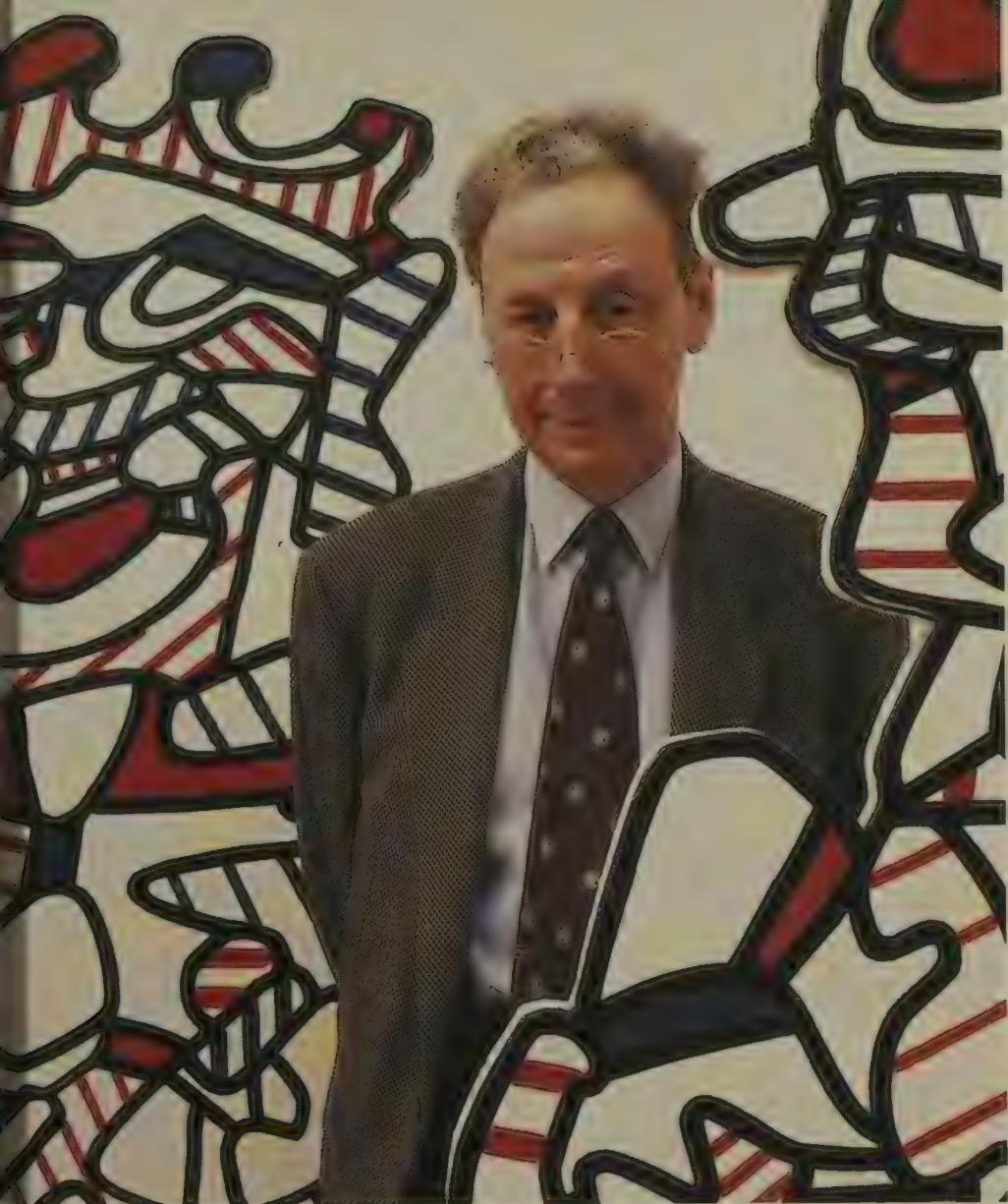
The trend for selling pictures from home is admirably illustrated by Wiseman Originals, main picture, run by Caroline Wiseman from her Georgian house, thus allowing clients to see modern art works in a traditional home setting. The gallery has excellent prints from £300-£800, as well as modern masters such as, above centre, this Howard Hodgkin print, £1,700.

Above left, Arturo Di Stefano photogravure, £329. Above right, Alison Pullen acrylic, £295, from Will's Art Warehouse, which boasts all works under £1,000. Opposite: top, Waddington stocks blue-chip work, like the Henry Moore bronze, right, price on application; left, Michèle Noach acrylic, £250.

developed, if not necessarily tutored, sensibility, even when it is not accompanied by deep pockets. And if, perchance, the Christmas present has not hit the spot, most dealers will be only too happy to swap a work or, a few years later when a once-favoured picture has lost its ability to please, take it back in part exchange for something else. (If you are buying a work for someone else, always make this clear to the dealer at the time of purchase.) The relationship should not consist of one-sided exploitation but of mutual benefit.

Buying in London—undoubtedly the art capital of Europe despite EU attempts

to ruin the trade by imposing ill-considered taxes—is made easy since art galleries are helpfully grouped together in certain areas. They seem to favour security in numbers: once one moves into a neighbourhood their relatives swiftly follow. The three main areas for buying art in London are Windmill Street in Fitzrovia, the Cork Street/Bond Street/St James' ghetto and Motcomb Street in leafy Belgravia. A Saturday morning spent wandering around these with a view to buying Christmas presents is made doubly easy since many mount special seasonal shows of smaller, perhaps less expensive works suitable for



master already written up in the history books, it is hard to spend over £1,000 on a print and at Wiseman Originals in Southwark a Matisse lithograph might be had for as little as £500. Certain galleries, such as Redfern, specialise in prints by up-and-coming artists for as little as a few hundred pounds, while Alan Cristea, also in Cork Street, sells prints of all sizes by the biggest names around, including Hockney and Hodgkin. For Lucian Freud prints, go to Marlborough Fine Art in Albemarle Street. Shrewder buyers with more time on their hands may choose to venture further afield to Art Space in Islington or to Curwen Gallery off Charlotte Street where prints by the less well known but equally able are a speciality. And if you can't find a Christmas present fitting your taste and pocket at Flowers Graphics in Hackney, where they have a vast, varied stock, then you had better stick to The Sock Shop. Also consider the possibility of buying an original film poster—another form of print. Reel Poster Gallery in Great Marlborough Street and Posters for Collectors in Putney are the specialist shops in this category and prices range from a few hundred pounds to many thousands for historical rarities and films starring the Hollywood greats.

Some 1,200 fine artists emerge from British art schools every year: it is inevitable, given their desperate and immediate need to make a living, and the swiftly-dawning realisation that they are not a new Damien Hirst, that many will produce attractive original art which sells extremely cheaply. Realising the desire of many modest but competent artists to sell work at virtually any price, coupled with the growing interest in original works, a new phenomenon has emerged: the art supermarket. The first opened last September when Harvey Nichols in Knightsbridge decided to experiment with selling art at prices from £150 to £300. Original works are stacked, customers select what they want and take it to the check-out. Voila! The staggering and immediate response was such that the scheme not only continues but has been extended to similarly up-market stores in Leeds, Edinburgh and Dublin. This new idea has taken off and is set to grow. It does not necessarily nurture a true collector's instinct in the buyer but it does fill struggling artists' stomachs. Will's Art Warehouse in Fulham, also run along supermarket lines, sells more expensive work than Harvey Nichols. Again, it capitalises on people's need to feel that they are not being pressured into buying something they don't like at a price they can't afford.

The most important criterion when buying art, for Christmas presents or otherwise, is that you should only do so because you like the work. If you suspect that it might be a good investment, do yourself a favour and leave your nest egg in the building society. Unless you are unusually fortunate, art is a rotten investment (although you wouldn't say that if you had bought for £10, at his degree show in 1962, the painting by David Hockney which the lucky



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW BELIEF

WADDINGTON GALLERIES

domestic interiors as opposed to corporate or institutional settings. Other galleries beyond the centre of town do likewise: New Grafton Gallery in Barnes, Flowers East in Hackney, and Purdy Hicks in Southwark are among the those who show a diversity of smaller works at this time of year.

Dealers specialising in the major modern and old master works are customarily unaffected by and indifferent to Christmas. At Waddington Galleries in Cork Street or around the corner at Agnews you'll find major names aplenty, with price tags usually affordable only by the international collectors and museums who regularly buy

there. But nearby, at the Fine Art Society and Maas Gallery, Victorian and early modern British pictures and sculptures of good breeding are much more accessible. The latter, run by enthusiasts with discriminating eyes, offer fine works by lesser-known artists that are often far better prospects as a purchase than something of negligible quality by a recognisable "name". I would always choose a fine drawing by a minor master for £500 over a dud by a famous artist for £10,000.

Most galleries sell prints as well as paintings, although you may have to ask to see them. Unless the work is by a modern



PHOTOGRAPH: COLIN BREWER/ANVILIMAGES

New user-friendly ways of buying art: above, on the Internet, and, left, from Will's Art Warehouse.



PHOTOGRAPH: COLIN BREWER/ANVILIMAGES

purchaser sold recently to the Tate Gallery for £220,000.

Until recently the British have been suspicious of buying original art. It has not been common even in well-heeled households to see original art on the walls—especially compared with the Continent where original work, particularly modern art, is comparatively commonplace. The fact that a new buying audience has recently emerged in Britain is reflected in the success of bazaars such as Art98, a contemporary art

fair held each January at the Business Design Centre in Islington. Such fairs are designed to sell work by young artists, known and unknown, at prices usually under £1,000. It is at around this figure that the majority of the art trade is conducted. Having identified this tendency, the magazine I edit, *Art Review*, specialises in promoting works in all media within this price range and publishes the second of its biannual *Art Under £1,000* supplements in November.

If all these opportunities for buying art in London are insufficient, in the past three months a new art market player has been introduced in the guise of the ubiquitous Internet. Galleries have quickly latched on to the possibilities of selling art via computer and the first sales are already registered. If you subscribe to the net it is worth calling Art Connection (www.art-collection.com/) because their site features 37 major London galleries showing hundreds of works. Staggering as it may seem, there are those who are now regularly buying art via the net. Although I dislike the idea of buying art from a computer screen, I do concede that for those who wish to see a work in the flesh, the net is a useful tool for establishing which galleries stock work that appeals. It will save miles of footslogging □

ARTY FACTS

19 & 20TH CENTURY ART

Fine Art Society, 148 New Bond St, W1 (0171-629 5116). Fine paintings, drawings, prints and applied arts, by major and minor artists from the first half of the century. From cheap to expensive.
Maas Gallery, 15a Clifford St, W1 (0171-734 2302). Victorian paintings, drawings and prints by RAs and other worthies. Genuine interest will be rewarded by the generous knowledge of the owner.
Waddington Galleries, 10 Cork St, W1 (0171-437 8611). Blue chip 20th-century art for international buyers, so less accessible than the above but drop in for an overview of the contemporary scene.

CONTEMPORARY ART

Art Space, 84 St Peters St, N1 (0171-359 7002). Smaller scale landscape and figure paintings and prints by known and unknown living artists.
New Grafton Gallery, 49 Church Rd, SW13 (0181-748 8850). Smaller paintings by living artists including most of the better RAs and younger hopefuls.
Purdy Hicks, 65 Hopton St, SE1 (0171-401 9229). Some of the finer ambitious young figurative (loosely speaking) painters.
Will's Art Warehouse, Unit 3, Heathman's St, SW6 (0171-371 8787). Cheap and cheerful paintings and prints by young and often talented unknowns.

PRINTS

Alan Cristea Gallery, 31 Cork St, W1 (0171-439 1866). Modern and contemporary masters.
Bankside Gallery, 48 Hopton St, SE1 (0171-928 7521). Home to national printmaking organisations and to the Royal Watercolour Society.
Curwen Gallery, 4 Windmill St, W1 (0171-636 1459). 20th-century prints by recognised masters and young hopefuls.
Flowers Graphics, 199-205 and 282 Richmond Rd, E8 (0181-985 3333). Contemporary prints by 30 artists in all styles.
Marlborough Fine Art (London) Ltd, 6 Albemarle St, W1 (0171-629 5161). Contemporary prints by Freud, Auerbach, Rego, Kossoff and other blue-chip moderns.
The Mercury Gallery, 26 Cork St, W1 (0171-734 7800). 20th-century British with an emphasis on fine drawings and prints.

New Academy Gallery, 34

Windmill St, W1 (0171-323 4700). Solid figurative work.
Redfern Gallery, 20 Cork St, W1 (0171-734 1732). 20th-century British prints.
Wiseman Originals, 34 West Sq, SE11 (0171-587 0747). From Picasso to Matisse to Hodgkin.

DRAWINGS

Abbott and Holder, 30 Museum St, WC1 (0171-637 3981). The Pictures for Christmas show, Nov 27-Dec 23, adds 600 new drawings and watercolours to a stock of 1,200 works, priced from £15-£250.
Michael Parkin Fine Art Ltd, 11 Motcomb St, SW1 (0171-235 8144). A scholarly mixture of drawings, prints and paintings by 20th-century British artists.
Piers Feetham Gallery, 475 Fulham Rd, SW6 (0171-381 5958). Specialist in drawings by contemporary artists.



MATISSE LITHOGRAPH, ©2000, WISEMAN ORIGINALS

Wolseley Fine Arts, 12 Needham Rd, W11 (0171-792 2788). 20th-century drawings and prints.

POSTERS

Posters for Collectors, 3 Ashlone Rd, Putney, SW15 (0181-788 8348). Posters of all origins.
The Reel Poster Gallery, 22 Great Marlborough St, W1 (0171-734 4303). Film posters from the earliest history to the present.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The Special Photographers Company, 21 Kensington Park Rd, W11 (0171-221 3489). International contemporary fine art photography.
Zelda Cheatile, 8 Cecil Court, WC2 (0171-836 0506). Works by over 40 British photographers including Bill Brandt.

ART FAIR

Art98, Business Design Centre, 52 Upper St, N1 (0171-359 3535). January 21-25. Galleries large and small take stands here.



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of the panatella.
Andrew Jefford
reports.

THE BIG SMOKE

The phenomenon seems, at first sight, perplexing. Throughout most of the developed world, fewer people smoke than at any point moment this century. Smoking bans are now standard in public places; tobacco health warnings are ubiquitous; tobacco taxes romp ahead of inflation; tobacco advertising is set for extinction. Meanwhile bureaucrats, politicians and lawyers, particularly in America, have harried and battered the tobacco industry on to the ropes, where they are continuing to thump it with all their might. Smoking, in sum, is out.

Or is it? No magazine has got further from a standing start in America in the last few years than one called *Cigar Aficionado*. When it was launched in autumn 1992,



Amongst the many establishments setting London alight with the newly fashionable art of cigar smoking is the recently opened No 1 Cigar Club.





Americans smoked about 100 million sizeable cigars per annum; this year, they'll smoke more than 300 million, and no ambitious club or bar would think of opening without its own cigar room. Much the same is happening, though in a rather less showy way, in London. Bars like Boisdale, Scotts and Drones make a point of welcoming cigar-smokers; London's highest-profile restaurant chain, that of the Conran group, is cigar-friendly (and founder Sir Terence himself is said to enjoy six stogies a day); private dining clubs, like Mosimann's and Monte's, regularly hold cigar dinners including, by the way, women-only events.

Cigar shops like Havana Club, have recently opened; a new dedicated cigar club, The No. 1 Cigar Club of London, offers members humidified lockers and the first-floor bar, dominated by a giant humidor, and the 37-seat ground-floor restaurant are open to non-members; and wine chain Oddbins recently opened a London flagship store with a lavishly stocked, walk-in humidor room. Long-term cigar-lovers are all too aware of the sudden fashionability of their vice by the fact that the most sought-after cigars have been almost unavailable in London for two or three years, while the prices of ordinary, much-loved Havana coronas have risen and risen.

What's happened is best described as a renaissance in tobacco connoisseurship. There

CIGARS WELCOME

Boisdale Restaurant, 15 Eccleston St, SW1.
Drones, 1 Pont St, SW1.
Havana Club, 165 Sloane St, SW1.
Mosimann's Dining Club, 11b West Halkin St, SW1.
Monte's On Sloane, 168 Sloane St, SW1.
The No 1 Cigar Club of London, 1 Percy St, W1.
Scotts Restaurant, 20 Mount Street, W1.

is a world of sensory difference between a glass of Lafite '82 and a glass of vodka and Coke, though both are alcoholic drinks; there is no less marked a difference between a Cohiba Exquisito and a Marlboro, tobacco products though both may be. For better or worse, ours is a hedonistic age; and the modern hedonist has woken up to the fact that fine cigars procure a singular and profound pleasure, and one utterly different from that offered by the dreary, emasculated modern cigarette.

Let's deal with health issues first. Cigarette smoke is acidic; cigar smoke is alkaline. Nicotine from acidic smoke can only be absorbed by inhalation, whereas the nicotine in alkaline smoke can be absorbed through the mouth lining. This is why cigar smoke does not have to be inhaled, thereby

greatly decreasing the lung-cancer risk caused by tar deposits in the alveoli of the lungs. There is, of course, no serious medical evidence to suggest that any form of smoking is good for you; there is irrefutable evidence, however, that one fine cigar a day, uninhaled, is much less bad for you than ten or twenty inhaled cigarettes a day. Even relatively heavy cigar-smokers, like Churchill himself, commonly enjoy old age; one of Britain's best-known cigar-smokers, Lord Grade of Elstree (Lew Grade), recently celebrated his 90th birthday. He smokes seven massive cigars a day, lighting the first at 6.30 in the morning.

I attended a cigar dinner at which Lord Grade even went so far as to attribute his longevity to Havana cigars. Havana, note: just as Bordeaux and Burgundy still produce the wines by which all others are measured, so Cuba remains the unchallenged source of the finest cigar tobacco. The wine analogy is in most senses apposite. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are grown around the wine world, but it is only in Bordeaux's soils, and under Bordeaux's climate, that they produce wines of the refinement and complexity of Margaux or Ausone. *Nicotiana tabacum* and its various seed strains are grown in many countries, but it is only Cuba's rich soils, and moist tropical air that produces leaf which, when

Cigar aficionados will find many venues across the capital which positively welcome those with a penchant for the weed. Establishments wreathed in expensive smoke include, opposite page: Drones, far left; the Havana Club, top; and Monte's restaurant, bottom, which regularly holds cigar dinners, including women-only events. Famous cigar smokers include, clockwise from below, Sir Terence Conran, Sir Winston Churchill, actor Tom Selleck, and Lord Grade.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: SYGMA; POPPERFOTO; ADVERTISING ARCHIVES; COLORIFIC
smoked, has the intensity and complexity of the authentic Havana. Indeed this quality doesn't come from all of Cuba's tobacco fields, but from estates in the relatively restricted areas of Partidos and Vuelta Abajo, towards the northern end of this banana-shaped island. Two seed strains are grown: Corojo (used for wrapper leaf) and Criollo, used for filler and binder.

Perhaps this is the moment to dissect some cigars. Cut open a cheap cigar and you'll find it is no more than a brown cigarette. In other words, it consists of chopped tobacco held in place with brown paper which is then enclosed in basic wrapper leaf. Do the same to a fine Havana cigar, though, and you'll find it is composed of pure leaf. In the centre there are "filler" leaves compressed in concertina form; these are held in place by a wrapping of binder leaf, and round the outside of the binder curls the fine-veined wrapper leaf, the most expensive part of the cigar. All of the leaves lie in the same direction: with the stem ends nearest to the mouth and the leaf tips furthest away. This is one reason why cigars become stronger as they diminish in length, since the concentration of flavour elements (and nicotine) is greater nearer the leaf stem than the tip. Leaves from the top of the plant are called *ligero*; from the middle of the plant, *seco*, and from the bottom, *volado*; *ligero* are strongest and *volado*

mildest. Each cigar "recipe" specifies different proportions of these leaf types, as well as the leaves' origin in different tobacco estates. Much the most beautiful of Cuba's tobacco fields are those where the Corojo wrapper leaves are grown, since in order to promote size, suppleness and delicacy they are covered by acres of graceful muslin. The effect, bizarrely, in the humid heat, is to suggest snowfields.

Everything about the production process of Havanas is painstaking, slow and unmechanised. Leaves are picked by hand, laid out individually in baskets, then strung up in barns for air-curing. Like the juice of wine-grapes, they must then undergo a process of fermentation—though the leaves give off not carbon dioxide, as wine does, but ammonia. They are sorted, moistened and fermented further before (like wines, again), they are matured, not in casks but in large palm-wrapped bundles. They are finally delivered to Havana itself.

Factories are usually ugly. Cigar factories—less a collection of machines, more a gathering of craftsmen and women—are places of evocative beauty. The cigars are not actually rolled on thighs, but on wooden desks; the cigar leaves are, however, sorted on thighs. Everywhere you look, there is painstaking human activity, as often as not lit by sunbeams falling through tattered curtains. The smell of unlit leaf as

well as cigar smoke (for the workers are allowed to smoke as many cigars as they want) is sublime, and never more so than in the conditioning room, where the finished cigars mature for a month or two in cedar cabinets. I have never been in a room with a more beautiful smell than this: savoury, complex, brimming with allusions to the forest, the stable, the ancestral drawing room; this reverberative scent, indeed, seems to allude to lost time itself.

How should you go about choosing a cigar? First of all, decide on the country of origin. Havanas are strongest and most complex—and expensive; debutant cigar smokers often find they prefer cigars from the Dominican Republic or Honduras, which are lighter, softer and creamier, and can be much cheaper. Both Davidoff and Dunhill now source all of their cigars from the Dominican Republic.

If you opt for a Havana, the next decision is marque and size. Relatively mildly flavoured marques include H Upmann, El Rey del Mundo and Rafael Gonzalez; medium-flavoured marques include Saint Luis Rey, Punch, Romeo y Julieta, Cohiba, Montecristo and Hoyo de Monterrey; full-flavoured marques include Bolivar, Partagas and Ramon Allones. Cigar sizes are measured by length (in inches) and ring gauge, a circular measure of width. Good starter cigars include the Petit Corona size

(5in by 42 ring gauge); the classic Corona is just a little longer (5½in by 42 ring gauge). The best known of the “fat” cigar sizes is the Robusto (4¾in by 50 ring gauge), though in fact the Belicoso is even fatter (5½in by 52 ring gauge). Small, slender cigars such as the Cohiba Panetela or Montecristo Joyita (4½in by 26 ring gauge) appeal to those who don’t want a lengthy smoke; the average Corona, for example, will take at least half

CHRISTMAS CIGARS: THE TOP TEN

1 *De Eenhorn, Peletier & Philips* £15.50 for 14. Small cigars don’t necessarily smoke well, but these beautifully boxed, Dutch-made cigars of blended Brazil, Java and Sumatra leaf and Sumatran sand-leaf wrapper are unusually soft, sweet and fragrant.

2 *Santa Damiana Coronas and tubed Tubulares Extra* £5.25/£5.70 each. Santa Damiana EMS (English Market Selection) is a Dominican cigar blended for the British market: it has the typical creaminess of Dominican cigars with a richer, more coffee-ish flavour than most.

3 *Romeo y Julieta Cedro No.3* £6.30 each. A cedar-wrapped Petit Corona which combines ethereal, resin-and-wild-mushroom aromas with relatively rich, sweet-edged flavours.

4 *H Upmann Corona* £7.60 each. One of the classic Coronas, the H Upmann offers ample coffee-nut aromas and flavours with a lingering, creamy finish. Satisfying and good value.

5 *Bolívar Corona and tubed Tubos No.1* £7.60/£8.50 each. The Bolívar Corona is the insider’s choice for this size: less assertive than other cigars from this marque, it is nonetheless a spicy, exuberant and well-balanced smoke.

6 *Cuba Exclusivo* £8.40 each. Cuba is a new Cuban marque of *figurado* cigars (closed at both ends, though only the mouth end needs

an hour to finish. The classic of the large cigar sizes is the Churchill (7in by 47 ring gauge); biggest, though very hard to find, is the enormous Montecristo ‘A’ and Romeo y Julieta Fabuloso (9½in by 47 ring gauge).

Fine Havana cigars generally have to be cut at the mouth end before smoking. Unless you have exceptionally sharp teeth,



cutting). The Exclusivo is the biggest of these (5½in by 46 ring gauge) with a creamy start, savoury middle flavours and a peppery finish.

7 *Cohiba Siglo V* £17.80 each. This is a long (6½in), lean (43 ring gauge), authoritative, close-textured cigar full of typically earthy, chocolate-and-nutmeg Cohiba flavour.

8 *Ramon Allones Specially Selected* £8.40 each. A relatively little-known Robusto, this cigar offers smooth flavours in a rich, creamy and harmonious style. It can be better value than some more celebrated Robustos (like the Partagas Series D No.4).

9 *Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure No. 1* £9.90 each. This meaty cigar is a Corona Gorda or “fat” Corona (5½in by 46 ring gauge) with complex earthy, leathery, raisiny flavours. The perfect cigar to follow Christmas lunch.

10 *Romeo y Julieta Prince of Wales* £12.40 each. Set aside the best part of an hour for this grand cigar which changes from lightly toasty, spicy, nutty flavours at the start, towards more powerful flavours of earth and under-growth. The perfect cigar to follow Christmas dinner.

this is best done with a guillotine; good tobacconists stock inexpensive, plastic-housed examples. Before drawing on the cigar, its end should be charred by rotating it in a match flame to aid even combustion; only then should you draw on the cigar to light it. If it goes out, relight it by toasting the end with a match flame without drawing on it; and when you’ve finished the cigar, allow it to expire demurely of its own accord □



WHERE TO SHOP

Stockists of a wide range of Havana and other cigars in London include:

Harrods; Selfridges; Cigar Club (mail order), 151 Harrow Rd, Wembley; Davidoff, 35 St James’s St, SW1; Alfred Dunhill, 30 Duke St, SW1; Havana Club, 165 Sloane St, SW1; James J Fox & Robert Lewis, 19 St James’s St, SW1; Oddbins, Bridges Wharf, Lombard Rd, SW1; Sautter of Mayfair, 106 Mount St, WI; Shervingtons, 337 High Holborn, WC1; and Walter Thurgood, 161-162 Salisbury House, London Wall, EC2.





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with the latest,
loveliest glassware.

Photographs
by Jean-Paul
Fröget

GLORIOUS GLASS

GLORIOUS GLASS

continued

To make your Christmas table outshine all the others choose an array of sumptuous glassware to add shimmering light and glowing colour to your settings. This season, fashionable tables simply cannot be without a feast of dazzling coloured glass—perhaps Italian Murano, complemented by a fabulous creation from an exciting young designer. Ben Dunnington's elegant, twisting candlestick (see previous page) would, for instance, make the perfect centrepiece. For a touch of fun, scatter your table with Liberty's coloured glass sweets to catch the light and reflect little pools of colour, or add golden glass sweets as place markers to welcome your guests.

PHOTOGRAPH PREVIOUS PAGE
See diagram below right

1 Turtle from the Sandy Wallin Collection, £540, Dickens & Jones, 224 Regent Street, W1, tel: 0171-734 7070.

2 St Louis yellow hock, £149 each, Harrods, 87-135 Brompton Road, SW1, tel: 0171-730 1234.

3 Ben Dunnington flute, £55 each, Liberty, 214 Regent Street, W1, tel: 0171-734 1234.

4 Handpainted lily flute, £13.50 each, by Amanda Robertson, for mail order and catalogue tel: 0171-228 7046.

5 Lime visage straight jug, £49.95, Harrods, as before.

6 Ben Dunnington candlestick, £155, Liberty, as before.

7 Visage urn perfume pot, £29.95, Harrods, as before.

8 Kosta Boda satellite goblet, £84.98 each, Harrods, as before.

9 Handpainted bowl, £32, by Amanda Robertson, as before.

10 Glass coaster with etched star motif, £25 each, Ore Design, 202 Kensington High Street, W8, tel: 0171-938 1900.

11 Coloured glass sweets ornaments, £3.95 each, Liberty, as before.

STYLIST AMANDA ROBERTSON



PHOTOGRAPH ABOVE *Left to right*
St Louis red liquor glass, set of six, £215.70,
Harrods, 87-135 Brompton Road, SW1,
tel: 0171-730 1234.

Murano gold and green wine glass, £31.90
each, Thomas Goode, 19 South Audley
Street, W1, tel: 0171-499 2823.

St Louis red thistle wine glass, £22.90 each,
Harrods, as before.

Paula Moser wine goblet, £17.10 each,
Thomas Goode, as before.

James Powell glass tazza c1870, £540,
Jeanette Hayhurst Fine Glass,
32a Kensington Church Street, W8,
tel: 0171-938 1539.

Glass sweets place markers, £6.95 each,
Liberty, 214 Regent Street, W1,
tel: 0171-734 1234.





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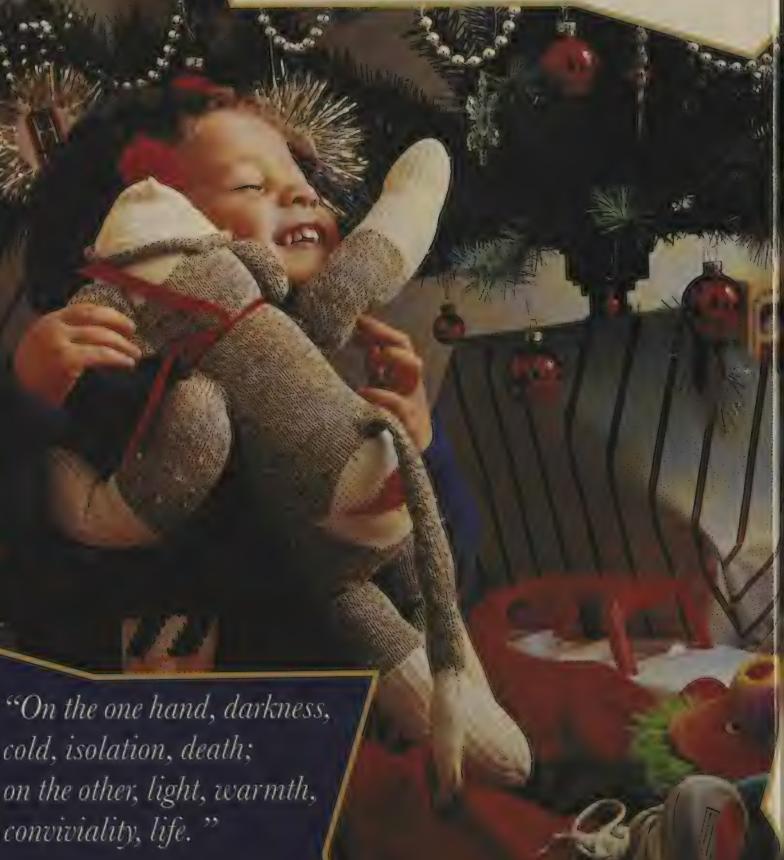
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CHRISTMAS

An orgy of self-indulgence, or a deep, spiritual longing?

Christopher Booker contemplates
the opposing elements of Christmas.



*"On the one hand, darkness,
cold, isolation, death;
on the other, light, warmth,
conviviality, life."*

CONTRADICTIONS



This December, as every year, we know we shall all be caught up in the rituals, explosion of imagery, the hell and the delight of this extraordinary moment we call Christmas. Yet what are we all doing? It might be thought, in our largely secular modern world, when people mark the Christmas season in a bewildering variety of different ways, it would no longer be possible to say that Christmas was centred on any one thing or any single idea. What on earth can we see in common between a drunken office party, where the secretary kisses the young man in accounts, and those pure treble

voices floating out from King's College Chapel choir singing "Once In Royal David's City"?

Can there conceivably be any unifying idea at the heart of this earthquake which shakes up all our lives in December, and leaves us stumbling back to the normal world in the first week of January with a deep sigh of relief that "it is all over for another year"?

In fact, one of the striking things about our modern Christmas is the way it has evolved, from so many historical sources and influences, into an event which most people in Britain celebrate by acting out a similar set of basic rituals. If we compile a mental checklist

of the way most of us will celebrate Christmas 1997, we think of sending and receiving at least a few cards, buying presents, putting decorations round the living room, and finding time to relax. We think of eating and drinking – more than usual quantities, of parties, getting together with family and friends. We

think of Father Christmas, of Christmas as "a time for the children". We may think of carol singers coming to the door, volunteers giving festive dinners to the homeless, and of going to church on Christmas morning.

Even deplored the darker side of Christmas has become part of the national ritual.

Every December we see those familiar articles solemnly warning us how it is "the worst moment of the year for family rows". We hear the routine complaints that "it is all too much"; that Christmas has become "far too materialistic" and that "the real message of Christmas has been lost".

But can we still discern any common thread in all these activities? Can we track down something that ties them all together, which can explain to us what we are really all doing at Christmas time, and why year after year we go on doing it in the same way? The answer to this riddle lies in contrast. And if that sounds like a riddle in itself, then have patience while we unravel the secret of what is really being contrasted with what.

As we all know, the idea of human beings having a festival in the heart of midwinter is immeasurably ancient. At the moment of the year when nights are longest and life in nature is at its lowest ebb comes this explosion of conviviality, blazing fires, eating and drinking to excess. To our primitive ancestors it was a defiant celebration of light triumphing over darkness, warmth over cold, abundance over scarcity, life over death.

But there was always another element in the equation, which the Christians developed when they took over the midwinter festival to mark the coming of the Christ-child, bringing new life into the world just when all was darkest. This was what one might call the inner counterpart to those outward contrasts; the idea we can already see in, for instance, the old Roman festival of Saturnalia that amid all this party-going and jolly people were being happily released from their own selfish concerns; which was why, long before Father Christmas came into the world, the midwinter festival was associated with general goodwill and the exchange of presents.

Through all the thousands of years which have led up to our modern vision of Christmas, at the deepest level, all these ideas continued to revolve round that same central opposition: on the one hand, darkness, cold, isolation, death; on the other, light, warmth, conviviality, life. And we can see precisely by what means this central opposition is symbolised in every aspect of how we still celebrate our midwinter festival in our sophisticated, brightly-lit, centrally-heated world of today. That is why, in the darkness of December, we turn drab old Oxford Street into a fairyland of light; and why in almost every home in the land we see magical chains of light shining out from dark trees.

And nowhere is this fundamental contrast more evident than in the Christmas cards on our walls and mantelpieces, yoking together images which, at first sight, could not seem more disparate. On the one hand, we may see something as trite as a robin standing in the snow, but the contrast is there between the cold, white, dead background and the cheerful warmth and life of the red-breasted little bird, blowing out its feathers as it defies the blasts of winter. On the other may be the solemnity of one of the world's great religious paintings, Rembrandt's famous nativity scene from the National Gallery. But as we look at that baby, conveying all the promise of new life, suffused with a magical glow amid the shadowy gloom of the stable, the basic message—light shining in the darkness, life

triumphantly defying death—is much the same as that of the robin in the snow.

It is no accident that the one traditional story which, for the British, has got to the heart of what Christmas is about better than any is Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*: the tale of how the miserable old miser Scrooge, frozen in the prison of his heartless selfishness, is finally thawed out by the spirit of Christmas and transformed into a new human being. The message of *A Christmas Carol* is centred on that basic problem of human nature which lies not just at the heart of what Christmas is about but at the root of Christianity itself: That we are each of us, like Scrooge, really two people. We can be self-centred, wrapped up in our own concerns, unfeeling, inwardly isolated in our own little world; we also have that deeper self which, when we are in touch with it, can open our eyes and hearts and give us a miraculous sense of being at one, not just with those around us, but with everyone and everything outside us. In this division at the heart of human nature lies the origin of almost all the problems of our world: both those we suffer in ourselves and those we inflict on others, often without being aware of it.

And it is that fundamental split in our personalities which this ritual of Christmas is designed to heal and overcome. All its customs and symbolism are really intended to serve that one underlying, central purpose, to lift us up out of that limited little selfish state in which we spend much of our lives and on to that other plane of our being, on which we are brought together in love and goodwill with all the world.

Listen to the words of those familiar carols as they float past us in the Christmas streets, and this is the message they are trying to convey. Even if we are usually too busy to hear them in the message of a world growing under the tyranny of human egotism, but now redeemed by that deeper power in human nature which can set us free: "Cast out our sin and enter in, born in us today".

We can think of countless ways in which our modern Saturnalia falls short of such high-flown aspirations, from commercials trying to get us to buy deodorants to lager louts vomiting in the gutter after a party in the pub. But even the darker aspects of Christmas, the sentimentality, the commercialism, the over-indulgence, the flaming family rows, all help to underline the story, by providing the negative to everything positive this unique moment in our year is meant to stand for.

The amazing thing about Christmas is the extent to which, in our supposedly irreligious, materialistic, trivial age, it still has the power to work its magic. Whether we see it as a religious event or not, a strange sense of euphoria still creeps over us as Christmas approaches, as we are once again opened up to those powers in each of us which lead us to feel love in our hearts, and a renewed sense of why our life on this earth is really worth living.

A very happy Christmas to you all.

"What can a drunken office party and a choir have in common?"



"Christmas reconciles the dual nature of our personalities."



"The worst moment of the year for family rows."



"A magical glow amid the shadowy gloom."

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JULIA FISHBECK

FESTIVE FEASTS

for Food Lovers

Spoil yourself this Christmas with a selection of astonishing gourmet treats. Henrietta Green sniffs out the speciality producers who will deliver to your door.

How and where do you buy your Christmas food? Do you brave the supermarkets? Or do you, like me, buy direct from the ever-expanding network of small speciality food producers springing up all over the country?

I have spent the past few months with Violet, my plump Yorkshire terrier, scouring Britain in search of the best seasonal delicacies. What we look for is food bursting with flavour, taste, character and personality, containing wholesome ingredients with no cheap, synthetic surprises.

Of course, these gourmet treats can be more expensive, but this year why not indulge in the very best? Seek out producers such as farmers who grow crops for flavour rather than yield, or who turn first-class raw materials into memorable confections. One such family in Cornwall skims and clots their rich Jersey milk into cream, churns it into butter and transforms it into a crumbly cheese. There are millers who

stonegrind their wheat in the old-fashioned way and then bake crisp biscuits or earthy bread with a springy texture.

Some producers, rather romantically, may be those who have turned their backs on the insistent demands of city life; others have generations of farming experience behind them. But what all have in common is their dedication to producing mouth-watering food. Sticklers for detail, many work by hand; I like to think of them as the craftspeople of the food world.

Take sausages, a British favourite and one guaranteed to give rise to a heated debate. For the best bangers, you cannot scrimp on the quality and quantity of the meat. Or what about a fruit cake? Every competent cook knows that if you use poor-grade flour, synthetic fats and minimal quantities of dried fruit, the result will be disappointing. So why should be it any different with a ready-made cake?

Over the last fifteen or so years there has been a significant growth in the "small but

select" method of food production, which I originally discovered purely by chance. While visiting the USA, I was thrilled by the Greenmarkets (a scheme started in New York for farmers and producers to sell their wares in town). On my return, I investigated the possibility of a starting a similar scheme over here. I found that farmers were experiencing an all-time low and being encouraged to diversify, to find other means of making money, such as "adding value" to their crops. That, initially, was how and why several of the craft producers began and, although several have long since fallen by the wayside, others still flourish.

One favourite is the Redstone family of Rocombe Farm in Devon. As a child, Suzanne spent her holidays in the country,

*Above: favourite feasts from Henrietta Green, right.
From left, porchetta from Pugh's Piglets;
home-cured hams from rare-breed pigs at Heal Farm
Meats; choice mushrooms from Taste of the
Wild; and a chocolate Christmas tree from Hamlin's.*



gorging on ice cream made from fresh cow's milk, and at the tender age of eight hatched a plot to make the best ice cream ever. Fast forward several years and that is exactly what she and her husband are doing.

What makes Roccombe Farm ice cream so special is its richness, purity and lusciousness. This is achieved by using full cream organic Jersey milk, added cream, free-range eggs, unrefined cane sugar and no chemically synthesised flavourings, stabilisers or emulsifiers. And, believe it or not, they now offer an ice cream mail-order service anywhere in the UK mainland by overnight delivery in styrofoam packaging.

Accessibility and innovation are all-important for the small producer. Take Anne Petch of Heal Farm Meats in Devon, who first launched her business by rearing rare-breed pigs. An on-farm butchery unit soon followed and, like all good ventures, it has grown and grown. Her hams are superb. Cured from her pigs—Gloucester Old Spot, Middle White, Tamworth, Berkshire, Large Black, Saddleback and British Lop—they have a deep succulence, a bracing meatiness and a firm texture.

Another faraway producer—this time in mid-Wales—is jam-maker extraordinaire Wendy Brandon. A former teacher, she now sells some of Britain's most innovative preserves and pickles. This Christmas you may be tempted by her vibrantly flavoured Cranberry & Orange preserve with its green label (indicating that it contains no salt or added sugar). Bursting with fruit and runny in set, her jams have a wonderfully

concentrated flavour. Not surprising as they are 100 per cent fresh fruit. Wendy's chutneys include green bean or pickled dried fruit (with baby dried figs flavoured with cinnamon and soaked in redcurrant fruit vinegar). Their inventive combinations of ingredients and judicious use of spices make them a splendid addition to any ham, cold cut or pie.

It is this quest for the unusual that I so relish when shopping from the speciality producers. But don't get me wrong, I'm not after difference for difference sake; what I want is true and meaningful innovation. This I discovered when I visited Rory Clark of Platinums whose farm in Kent has 25 acres under Kentish cobnut (a type of hazelnut). Until two years ago Rory simply sent his crop to market; then he started "adding value" by coating part of his crop with a dark, deep chocolate. Such is his success that this year the entire 14-ton yield will be treated in this way.

When it comes to the ingredients for the Christmas meal, I am a stickler for tradition. Whichever bird—goose or turkey—I plump for, I seek out farmers who grow them in the "proper" way, feeding them on vegetable protein (for flavour) and allowing them room to exercise (for texture). This year's turkey—a Kelly Bronze—will come from Kelly's Turkey Farms in Essex. Painstakingly bred by father and son Derek and Paul Kelly over several generations, it

is the Rolls-Royce of birds. A mixture of the flavoursome Norfolk Black, Cambridge Bronze and Rolstead White, it has densely textured meat, ample breast, marbled muscle meat and a good fat cover (essential for moistness). And as a turkey is a game bird, it is hung for a minimum of seven days to allow its rich taste to develop.

Claire Symington, a former head chef at Leith's Catering, rears first-class geese. Because they range free on grass and are fed fresh potatoes and corn, their flesh is a distinctive yellow with a deep meaty flavour. Like turkey, geese need to be hung and Claire strings hers up for ten days, then sells them oven-ready. She also produces an amazing confection: a three-bird roast. This consists of a boned goose, stuffed with a boned chicken, stuffed with a boned pheasant, with fresh pork, sage and orange stuffing spread between each layer.

Locals crowd her farm shop during December when it is open seven days a week. Festively decorated, it is crammed with seasonal goodies such as fresh holly wreaths, as well as home-made mince pies, brandy butter, jams, fruit jellies, bags of peppermint creams, nut brittle, and even ready-made meals for the freezer.

Claire, like so many of the producers whose food I love, is an inspiration to us all. They work hard, offering us produce to enjoy and savour. Try it and I can promise you, you will not be disappointed.

*We look for
food bursting with
flavour and
personality, made
with wholesome
ingredients.*

PICK OF THE CROP FOR A GOURMET CHRISTMAS



CHOCOLATE COBNUTS

See main article. Platinums, Buxton Oast, Shingle Barn Lane, Hunton, Maidstone, Kent ME15 0QR (01787 248330).

GOURMET FOOD CLUB

The Scottish Gourmet, a food club costing £14.45 for three years' membership, is unusual in that it sends out vacuum-packed cooked dishes. Try Meg Dod's oyster soup for a Christmas starter (£4.78 for a carton for two), garlic mushrooms (£6.47 for 450g) or the luxurious Springbank pâté, containing goose

and duck livers, truffles, malt whisky, cream and herbs (£9.89 for 225g). The Scottish Gourmet, Thistle Mill, Biggar, Strathclyde ML12 6LP (01899 221268).

READY-MADE CHRISTMAS

At Home is the ultimate answer to the non-cook's prayer. It will deliver, on Christmas Eve, a huge box containing the entire Christmas meal ready-prepared and ready-to-cook. This year's feast includes terrine of fresh lobster, crab and prawn wrapped in smoked salmon, turkey with two stuffings, gravy, bread sauce, cranberry sauce with port, chipolatas wrapped in bacon, potatoes with goose fat to roast them in, Brussels sprouts with chestnuts and a winter root vegetable purée. Christmas pudding and mince pies to follow. £45 per head. At Home, 40 High St, Cobham, Surrey KT11 3EB (01932 862026).

TRUFFLE HUNTING

For sheer indulgence, it is difficult to beat a fresh truffle. R E Campbell import *Tuber melanosporum*, the dark black truffle

from Perigord with a great smell and a wonderful taste. At £400 a kilo, you may be surprised to hear that a 30g truffle—the size of a walnut—costs only £12.69. R E Campbell Ltd, Maltings Place, Bagley's Lane, London SW6 2BY (0171-371 5566).

PUDDINGS GALORE

Cook Joyce Molyneux sells hearty Christmas puddings from her restaurant. They contain masses of muscat raisins, sultanas, diced apple, fresh orange and lemon juice and rind, eggs, preserved ginger, nutmeg, mace, flour, breadcrumbs, beef suet and brandy. Soft, rich and dark, a 2lb pudding costs £10 and comes wrapped in calico. The Carved Angel, 2 South Embankment, Dartmouth, Devon TQ6 9DH (01803 832465).

CHEESE PLEASE

Walking into Neal's Yard is like a visit to cheese heaven. The cheeses are in peak condition, as this is one of the few shops that ripens its wares in state-of-the-art humidity- and temperature-controlled cellars. Christmas classics include whole

Stiltons from Colston Bassett, Montgomery's Cheddar, Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire, Appleby's Cheshire, creamy mould-ripened Bonchesters, rind-washed Milleens and Gabriel, a 2-year-plus cheese that eats like a mountain Gruyère. Neal's Yard Dairy, 6 Park St, London SE1 9AB (0171-407 1800).

PURE-BRED BOAR

Wild boar has a deeper, more resonant flavour than pork, a texture rather like





beef and is surprisingly lean. Nigel Dauncey's pure-bred herd roams freely in fields in conditions that approximate the wild. A whole haunch makes a good roasting joint and costs £10.90 per kilo—5kg will feed 12 people. Nigel can also supply a whole baby wild boar, which comes with its head on and tastes mild and buttery. Barrow Boar, Fosters Farm, South Barrow, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 7LN (01963 440315).

FREE-RANGE GEESE

See main article. Claire Symington, Seldom Seen Farm, Billesdon, Leicester, Leics LE7 9FA (0116-259 6742).

A FISHY TALE

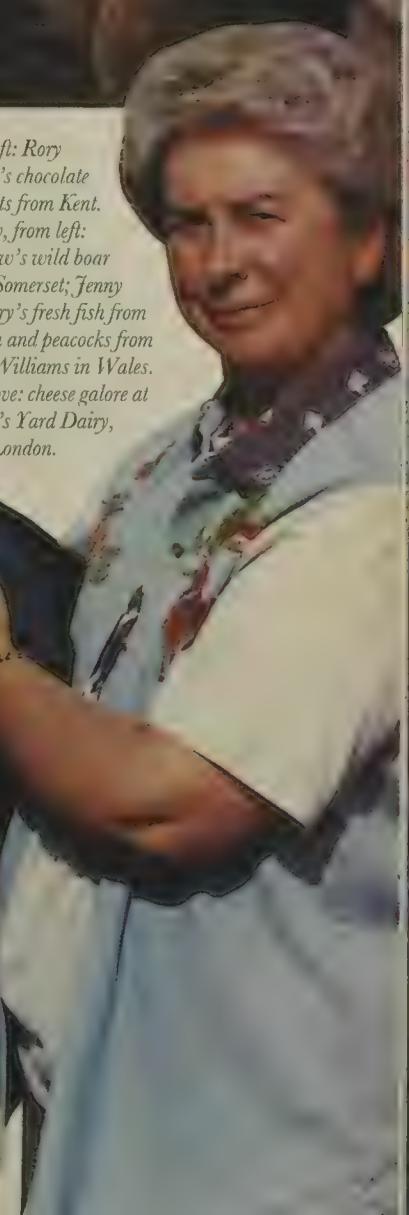
A bespoke service supplying fish lovers all over Britain by overnight delivery from Devon has been set up by Jenny Rothery. For Christmas she recommends turbot, whole monkfish tails or individual Dover soles, as well as lemon sole, which can be supplied prepared *à la bonne femme*. Lemon sole makes a good starter, especially if served with green grapes for sole Veronique. The shellfish, lobsters and crabs are also a good buy—a lobster will set you back about £8.50 per lb. The Market Fish Shop, The Old Market, Victoria Rd, Dartmouth, Devon TQ6 9SE (01803 832782).

PEACOCK PIE

Jill Williams keeps peacocks, a few of which she sells for the table. Peacocks do not carry much flesh, but Jill feeds them up to counteract this. As a table centrepiece a peacock looks tremendous, particularly if the male's tail is fanned out. A cock bird costs £75 and a hen—although not so popular as it has dowdy feathers—£40. Glebedale Peacocks, Parsonage Farm, Llandewi Skirrid, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire NP7 8AG (01873 854358). ▷

Far left: Rory Clark's chocolate cobnuts from Kent. Below, from left: Barrow's wild boar from Somerset; Jenny Rothery's fresh fish from Devon and peacocks from Jill Williams in Wales.

Above: cheese galore at Neal's Yard Dairy, London.





THIS LITTLE PIGGY

Pugh's suckling pig is a spectacular alternative to a bird for the Christmas meal and has softer-textured, more delicately flavoured meat than pork. It is delivered oven-ready, cleaned and gutted with its head on! A 16lb piglet (smaller sizes are available) costs £50. Or try porchetta – boned suckling pig – stuffed with fresh herbs, garlic and seasoning. It costs £58–£60 for 8–14lb. Pugh's Piglets, Bowgreave House Farm, Bowgreave, Garstang, Lancs PR3 1YE (01995 602571).

RARE-BREED PORK

See main article. Anne Petch, Heal Farm Meats, King's Nympton, Umberleigh, Devon EX37 9TB (01769 574341).

PEARS APLENTY

If you like to serve pickled pears with goose at Christmas, try Bay Tree Food Company's whole baby pears, poached in a light white-wine-vinegar syrup and spiced. They cost £5.50 for a 380g jar. The Bay Tree Food Company, Lower Westcombe Farm, Evercreech, Shepton

Try Rocombe Farm's mail-order ice cream, above; spicy, pickled pears from The Bay Tree Food Company, left, or go for Karol Bailey's goose, below.

Mallet, Somerset BA4 6ER (01749 831300).

COOL YULE ICE CREAM

See main article. Rocombe Farm Mail Order, Middle Rocombe Farm, Stoke in Teignhead, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 4QL (01626 834545 daytime; 01626 872291 eves).

MUSHROOM MAGIC

For an easy first course try Mrs Tee's mushroom confit, made with generous slices of wild fungi cooked in white-wine vinegar with herbs, port and truffle oil added (£7 for 200g). Mixed pickled mushrooms, plus various dried mushrooms are also available. Mrs Tee's Wild Mushrooms, Gorse Meadow, Sway Rd, Lymington, Hants SO41 8LR (01590 673354).

MINIATURE VEGETABLES

As an alternative to Brussels sprouts, try French-grown baby vegetables such as tiny carrots, golf-ball sized turnips and fennel.



KING OF THE TURKEYS

A slow-growing bird, the Kelly Bronze has a deep flavour and good fat cover (for moistness).

Recipe A Kelly turkey is the perfect choice for this recipe, given to Fat Lady Clarissa Dickson-Wright by her mother.

1 large turkey; 450g (1/2lb) butter; salt and black pepper

Stuffing 1: combine sausage meat and chestnuts, salt and pepper.

Stuffing 2: combine onions, breadcrumbs, parsley, thyme and celery or lovage seed, salt and pepper and a dash of cayenne. Cook together in plenty of butter.

Place stuffing 1 at the breast end, and stuffing

2 in the body cavity. Lie the bird on tinfoil, season and smear with butter. Wrap in the foil and cook at 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4. Allow 15 minutes per pound if under 6.8kg (15lb), and 10 minutes per pound if over. About 20 minutes before the end of the cooking time, open the foil and fold back. Sprinkle with flour and baste. Zap up oven to 230°C/450°F/gas mark 8 and brown. Serve with all the trimmings.

Kelly's Turkeys: see main article. Voted Best Speciality Food Winner in the 1997 Good Food Awards. Kelly Turkey Farms, Springate Farm, Bicknacre Rd, Danbury, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 4EP (01245 223581).

Packed in 300g punnets (which hold, for example, 30 turnips), they cost around £10.50 each. Mushrooms are also a speciality. The loose mixture contains whatever is available, but chances are there will be chanterelles, pieds de mouton and shiitake. Taste of the Wild, 31 London Stone Estate, Broughton St, London SW8 3QJ (0171-498 5654).

BRITISH-BORN BRANDY

This year, for the first time ever, you can buy a British brandy. A single-cask brandy, it has been "ferreted away under bond for five years to mature in oak barrels", and has an agreeable, relatively smooth, and deep flavour. Only 2,000 bottles are available, so it's not cheap—£17.99 for a 35cl bottle. Pilton Manor Vineyard, Pilton, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 4BE (01749 890325).

A GANDER WITH GOOSE

Karol Bailey rears geese, turkeys and duck. Her Goose Banquet Roll is prepared from a whole boned goose, rolled around layers of turkey breast and own-cured ham or pheasant breast. Rolls of between 8–15lb cost £7 per lb. She also prepares a coarse goose terrine and chunky goose sausages. Holly Tree Farm Shop, Chester Rd, Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0EU (01565 651835). □





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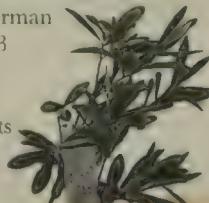
JAMS AND PICKLES

See main feature. Wendy Brandon, Felin Wen, Boncath, Pembrokeshire SA37 0JR (01239 841568).

CHESTNUT STUFFING

Why spend hours peeling fresh chestnuts when you can buy them ready-to-use? The best on the market come from the Corrèze region near the Dordogne in southwest France. They are cooked, peeled and vacuum-packed, and have the advantage of not falling apart when you mix them into a stuffing. Imported by the Merchant Gourmet, you can find them in most good food shops. Call 0345 585168 for your nearest stockist, or mail-order from the Teesdale Trencherman on 01833 638370.

A 200g pack costs £2.50.



Stuck for foodie gifts? Try mushrooms from A Taste of the Wild, above, or Wendy Brandon's jams and pickles, left. Green-fingered friends will love The Gluttonous Gardener's offerings, below, or how about a year's worth of cake from Meg Rivers, below right?

LET THEM EAT CAKE

There are book clubs and CD clubs, so why not a cake club? A year's membership to Meg Rivers' cake club costs £92, which gives members six cakes a year, plus a storage tin. Meg's cakes are made with the very best, natural ingredients and each weighs around 1kg. Last year's members received first a Madeira cake in February, then an apricot and almond cake, followed by pineapple, cherry, chocolate and rich fruit. The Cake Club, Middle Tysoe, Warwickshire CV35 0SE (01295 688101).

GROW YOUR OWN

Ned Trier's company sends out foodie gifts such as the Olive Enthusiast's Kit, a bushy young olive tree about one foot high in a terracotta pot, plus instructions and, for immediate consumption, a bottle of extra-virgin organic olive oil. Looked after properly, the tree will start to produce olives after two years. Other kits are the Currant Affair—a blackcurrant bush and a bottle of crème de cassis, and the Wine and Vine Box—a vine and a bottle of claret. Each costs £25. The Gluttonous Gardener, Vitis House, 50 Dickens St, London SW8 3EQ (0171-627 0800).

ILLUSTRATION BY CLARE MCKEE



CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES

James' Christmas Pudding Truffle will satisfy the most serious chocolate lovers. A mixture of fresh cream, dried fruits soaked in brandy, candied peel and roasted almonds is doused with yet more brandy and judiciously spiced. James hand-rolls this into a mini-pudding, dips it in dark chocolate, dribbles some white chocolate over the top, and then decorates it with marzipan leaves and sugar berries. Each 2in truffle costs £1.95. Also available are the Chocolate Lover Truffles, powerfully deep and dark, at £3.25 for a 100g bag (containing about

seven truffles). James Chocolates, Lower Westcombe Farm, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 6ER (01749 831330).

CHRISTMAS TREE TREAT

A most unusual Christmas tree "cake" (see picture on p54) costing £40 comes from Hamlin's of Kensington in London. Strong, 70 per cent cocoa solid chocolate is hand-piped into "twigs" which are piled one on top of the other in ever-decreasing circles, until the tree reaches about 12in high. It is too fragile to be sent by mail, but Hamlin's will deliver in London by arrangement. Hamlin's, 3 Abingdon Rd, Kensington, W8 6AH (0171-376 2191).

READER BOOK OFFER

The festive food recommendations shown above are taken from *The Food Lover's Christmas* by Henrietta Green, published by Ebury Press at £5.99. ILN readers may obtain a copy at the specially reduced price of £4.99 (there is no charge for p&p). Call Tiptree Book Services on 01206 255800 and quote the reference Illustrated London News.





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A CHRISTMAS QUIZ

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HAS DRAWN UP
A SET OF 40 QUESTIONS,
ALL RELATING TO
CHRISTMAS, TO ADD
TO YOUR REPERTORY
OF PARTY
ENTERTAINMENTS.
SEE PAGE 78 FOR THE
ANSWERS.



1. How many gifts did "My true love send to" me over "The Twelve Days of Christmas"?

2. Partridges, turtle doves, French hens, geese and swans are obvious—but what were "colly birds"?

3. According to the hymn, to whom did the angel say the first Nowell (Noel)?

4. Candles are lit at Christingle services; from what are the candle-holders made?

5. Who wrote the lines, "And is it true? And is it true, / This most tremendous tale of all, / Seen in a stained-glass window's hue, / A Baby in an ox's stall?"?

6. Against whom did the Decembrists plot in 1825?

7. Sir Henry Cole and John C Horsley produced, in 1846, the first commercial version in Britain of which seasonal item?

8. Which Berlin musical featured a dream of a white Christmas?

9. Which old English carol was sung before Prince Henry at St John's College, Oxford, at Christmas in 1607?

10. Who recorded the album *The Choirboy's Christmas*?

11. The plant *helleborus niger* usually flowers at Christmas; what is its more common name?

12. If you were born on Christmas Day, what would your sign of the Zodiac be?

13. Conifers such as Christmas trees are gymnosperms. What does "gymnosperm" mean?

14. If you hear *Erythacus rubecula* in your garden, to what would you be listening?

15. What is the collective name for turkeys?

16. What is the title of the poem which begins: "A cold coming we had of it, Just the worst time of the year For a journey, such a journey: The ways deep and the weather sharp, The very dead of winter."

17. What links ilex, Tiffany's and Saturn?

18. Who wrote *A Child's Christmas in Wales*?

19. According to legend, Joseph of Arimathea thrust his staff into the earth on Weary-All Hill, where it took root and grew into a tree (*Crataegus oxyacantha*) which blossoms at Christmas time. As what is this tree now known?

20. Olibanum and opopanax are also known as what?

21. Who painted two versions of the nativity scene called *The Virgin of the Rocks* (now in the Louvre and in the National Gallery in London)?

22. Which saint is honoured in Sweden in December as Queen of the Light?

23. If you were born in December, what would be your birthstone?

ILLUSTRATION: PHILIP NELSON

24. Who wrote the words of the Christmas carol whose first line is "In the bleak midwinter"?

25. The centenary of which scientific event will be on Boxing Day 1998?

26. Who promised to honour Christmas in his heart and try to keep it all the year?

27. Christmas Island is a territory of which country?

28. In the legal calendar, on what date does the Michaelmas term end?

29. How many candles are there on a Hanukiah?

30. St Nicholas is the patron saint of which Scottish city?

31. To whom did the old slang term "St Nicholas' clerks" refer?

32. Who, according to the much-parodied narrative poem by George R Sims, sat on Christmas Day "... with clean-washed hands and faces/In a long and hungry line"?

33. What links Boxing Day, the crown of Hungary and Parliament?

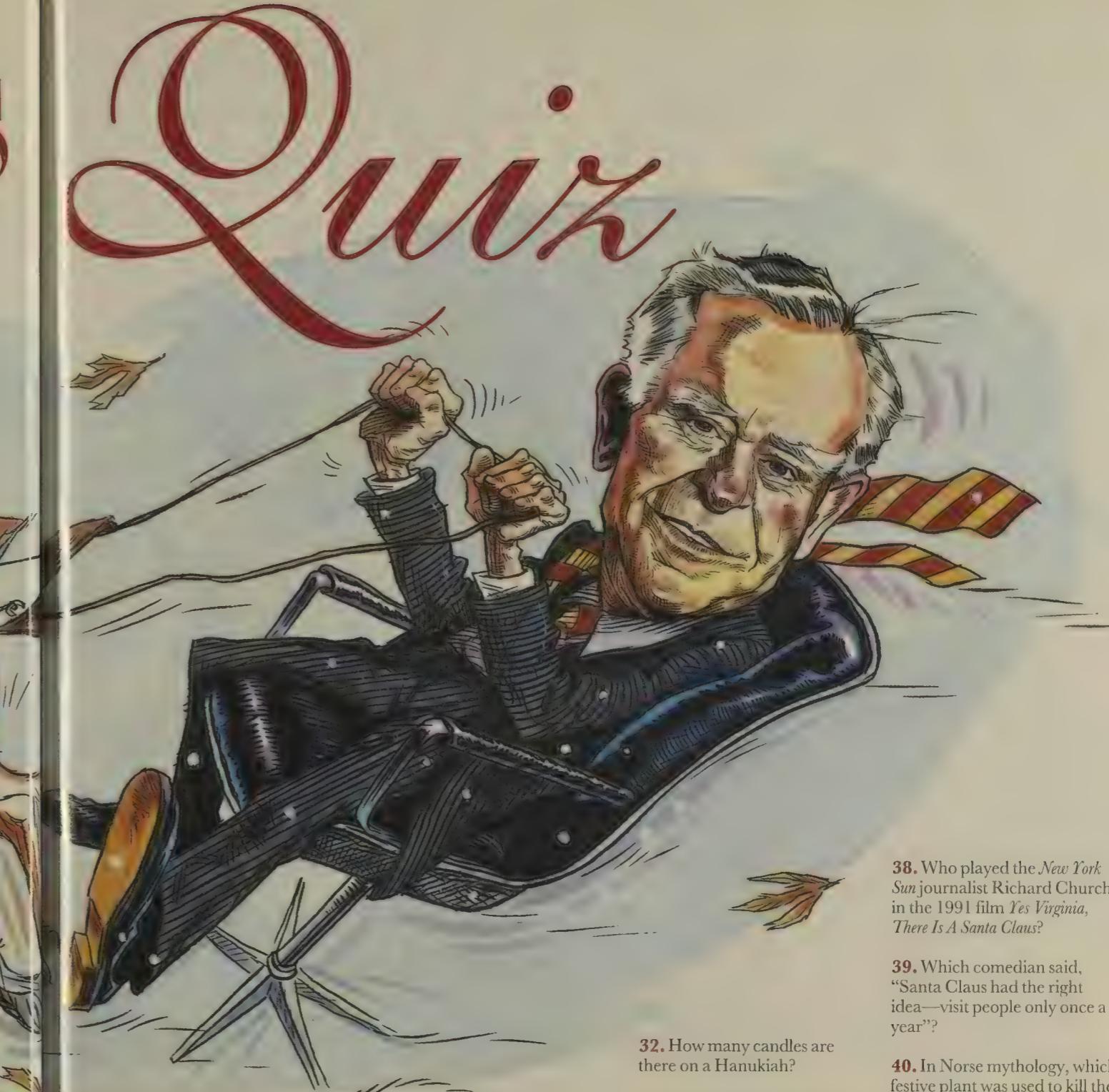
34. According to Louisa May Alcott, Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without—what?

35. Who played the *New York Sun* journalist Richard Church in the 1991 film *Yes Virginia, There Is A Santa Claus*?

36. Which comedian said, "Santa Claus had the right idea—visit people only once a year"?

37. In Norse mythology, which festive plant was used to kill the White God, Baldur?

I've Started so I'll Finish, The Story of Mastermind by Magnus Magnusson, is published by Little, Brown, price £16.99. Combining his memories with records of the Mastermind Club—an exclusive haven for survivors of the black chair—Magnus recreates the thrills and spills of the great quiz show.



SEASONAL GIFTS FOR ALL

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with pearls and embroidered with pure gold thread. Specialities include Shahtoosh, considered the finest fabric in the world, which is made by collecting tiny strands of wool from a rare wild goat, and papier-mâché objets d'art painted in pure gold—a technique introduced by the Mughal Emperors.

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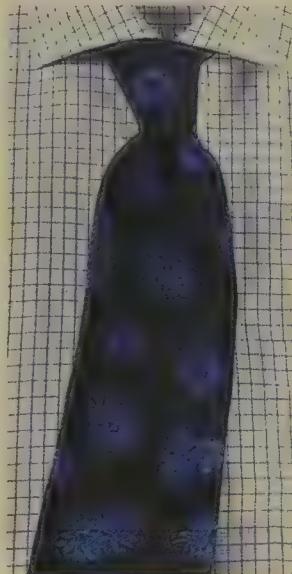
Send your friends a personalised greeting by ordering your own custom-made Christmas cards. North London-based New Perspectives will transform your photographs or artwork into high-quality cards, ideal for either personal or business use (minimum order 250). Alternatively, choose from the company's range of 11 ready-made designs portraying London in winter. Available from branches of John Lewis/Peter Jones or direct.

*New Perspectives, Optima House,
15 Lichfield Close, Barnet EN4 9TR.
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Coles, 101 Jermyn Street, London SW1Y 6EE. For mail order Tel: 0171-930 6448.



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For further information contact Carl Zeiss Ltd, Binocular Division, Tel: 01707 871320.



Great travellers

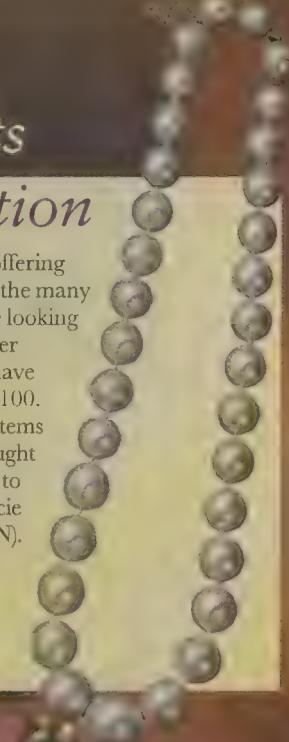
Liz Davenport's fashions are the perfect companions for women on the move. Practical, non-creasing, easy to care for, yet eminently stylish, they are just what every woman wants in her suitcase. Hallmarks of the designs are the easy, fluid and flattering cut of the cloth and classic styling. Says Liz Davenport: "We think our clothes are as smart as you are." And for those who are so busy they have no time to shop, the store offers a beautiful mail-order catalogue.

Liz Davenport, 70 New Bond Street, London W1. Tel: 0171-491 1928.

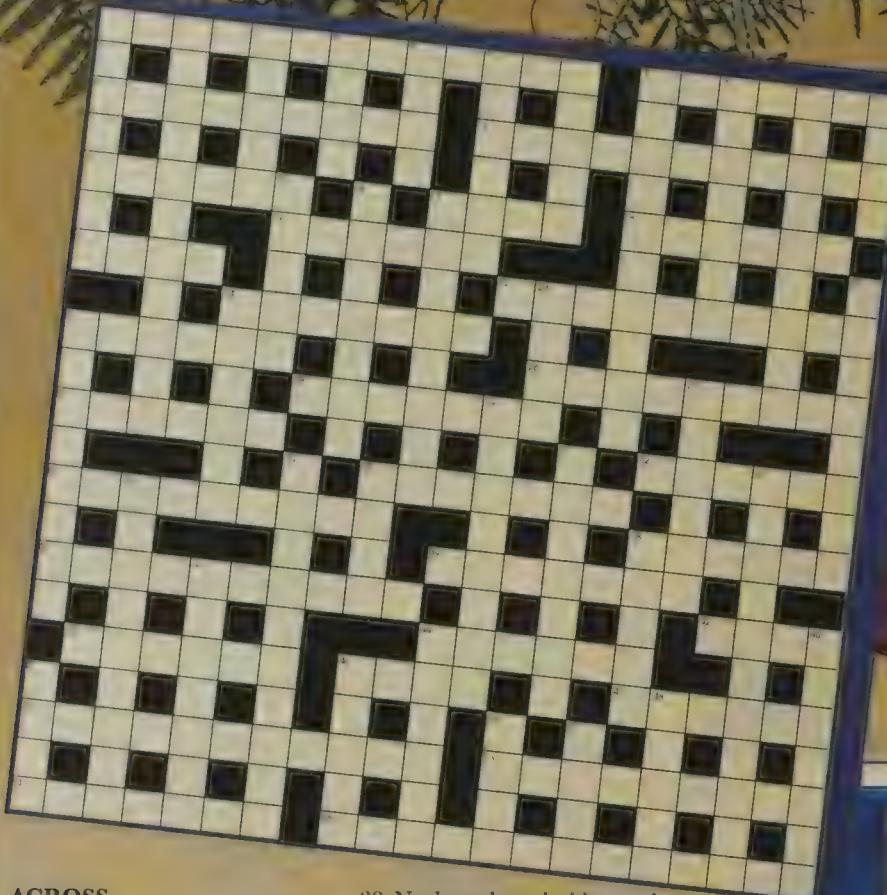
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CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- A bit stiff for conveying greetings. (9,4)
- One might be taken out to have a drink. (7)
- Noel's cover for affectionate contacts. (9)
- Seasonal cheer applied to factory production? (11)
- Loved a party to take on colour. (6)
- Extra money not starting to give responsibility. (4)
- Church saint useful in cooking. (6)
- A drink for everybody in the neighbourhood. (6)
- It will soon offer a new occasion for celebration. (4)
- Reduction in value of French space for low living. (10)
- Years ago when there was a choice of haberdashery. (7)
- Mate's aim achieved after one day. (6)
- Did he swear to get ahead of you? (9)
- Where people eat and shout about having a wild rave. (7)
- One has to move fast to get over the table. (6)
- For all that clever talk laughter starts late. (6)
- Coach available but one may go on foot. (7)
- Hidden ray diverted by someone in the office. (9)

- Not best pleased with exercises the night before Diana's first appearance. (6)
- Speech about what to wear this time. (7)
- People sent to get aid—Noel being riotous. (10)
- This time going on a bender could result in a fall. (4)
- Possibly a pot some housewives seldom use. (6)
- A supply of food being carried. (6)
- Just the place to have fun. (4)
- Contrive to give a chap time. (6)
- Make a name in a third-rate circle for dealing. (11)
- Meaning a little one can be powerful. (9)
- Having vision allows ways to pass through. (7)
- Good chap on the look-out for an extra guest. (4,9)

DOWN

- People at a gathering being firm. (7)
- All the others talk of making good again. (11)
- Find an answer for unhappy loves. (5)
- Story a young lady lisped. (4)
- Take off in the garden maybe. (4)
- What a nut the old man turned out to be! (6)



COGNAC TO BE WON!

A bottle of VS Courvoisier Cognac will be awarded for the first correct solution opened. Send solutions, accompanied by the entrant's name and address, to: The Editor, Illustrated London News, 20 Upper Ground, London SE1 9PF, by January 5 (after which the name of the winner and solution list will be obtainable by sending an s.a.e.). Entrants must be aged over 18.

- They get thrown into bed for a game. (5)
- Where can one take an elevated view of city life. (10)
- Work on a course like something precious. (7)
- Nothing to pay? Wonderful! (9)
- The fury of fashion. (4)
- Five hundred given to greedy old king. (5)
- Put someone in position to convey the season's greetings. (7)
- Survey of a previous time finished. (4-4)
- Surprised at first to be given guidance. (8)
- Spot an English person of intelligence. (4)
- Bless you for that outburst! (6)
- Sack the team around the Yule log. (8)
- Use tin in a way that creates a bond. (6)
- They have a certain pull in Christmas travelling. (8)
- She's got it coming to her! (7)
- Enjoying getting round to some hospitality? (6,1,4)
- Remove wrinkles around tardy alteration for special cover. (5,5)
- One lacks experience in a pretty rough situation. (4)
- Late beer bash after Christmas starts—it's the seasonal thing to do! (9)
- In the afternoon give a girl something to sing. (5)
- Soldier as the recipient of protection? (7)
- Holly perhaps having been in the wars. (7)
- Stable motherhood figure of this time. (6)
- Lightly strike loud use of tongue. (5)
- Assent to a colour cut-off. (5)
- Ground for thinking the race has been rigged. (4)
- What you think you see. (4)
- Prepared to admit one is bothered about parking. (4)



SUPERFORMANCE



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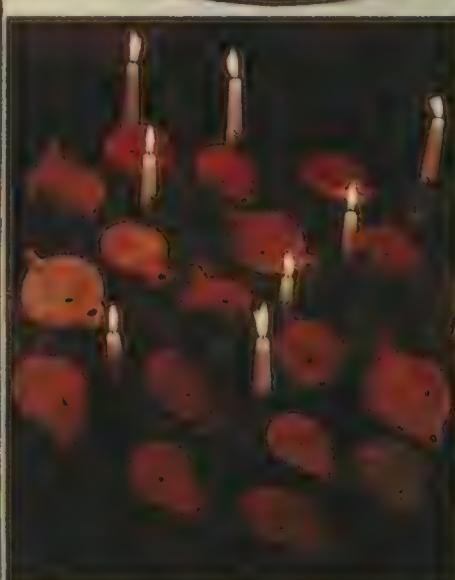
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S T I L L T H E F A S T E S T W A Y T O F R A N C E

Past & Presents

Looking for a gift that's out of the ordinary? How about a slice of history in the shape of an authentic antiquity from *Ancient Art*.



Clockwise from above: Roman terracotta oil lamps from the 1st-2nd century AD, £30-£40. Iridescent onion flasks used for wine in the 1700s, £165. A sculpted terracotta head from China, circa 200BC, £170.

Relics from ancient Egypt, 2,000-500BC, including shabtis effigies of servants to go with their masters into the afterlife, £50-£300. Mesopotamian fertility figure, or Halaf, dating from the 5th millennium BC, £200.

Sumerian beads, Egyptian scarabs, Roman oil lamps...the items for sale from *Ancient Art* are presents with a difference—their uniqueness being that, unlike gifts from museum shops and catalogues such as *Past Times*, all of the objects are authentic antiquities, not reproductions.

Unbelievable as it sounds, you can now serve dinner on Old Testament pottery or decorate your mantelpiece with ancient Greek pots—and for much less money than you would imagine. For instance, in the Christmas catalogue there are fish fossils dating from 36-58 million years ago for £15, a Sumerian necklace made of black-and-white steatite, dating from 3,000BC, for £20, or 17th-century thimbles, found in the Thames, for £12.50.

The catalogue was launched in 1996, but the company behind it has been going for 25 years under Chris Martin, a dealer in coins and antiquities and a member of LAPADA and the Antiquities' Dealers Association. All of the items for sale are authenticated by Martin, but if he has any doubts about a piece, he has it verified by institutions such as the British Museum.

Marketing Director Emma Davies says the catalogue was developed for "people who didn't know these things existed or thought them dusty and boring". It was designed to bring antiquities out of the museum cellars and into people's homes.

"Why shouldn't Mrs Brown from Acacia Avenue own an Egyptian necklace?" reasons Emma.

Sounds wonderful, but how come these relics are on the market and not in museum vaults?

Ancient Art only sells surplus artefacts from old collections or excavations. The best specimens are, naturally, kept by museums, but what they don't

need can be sold off. When the catalogue was first launched there was an outcry from some archaeologists who felt that the demand for fresh supplies of artefacts to sell would lead to robberies of sites. However, *Ancient Art* acquires all of its collections from legal and respectable sources. Around 60 per cent of its material comes from private collections which are sold to Martin by the owners. Bronze blades were part of Lord McAlpine's collection, for example. "I had a shop dealing in antiquities and curiosities," says McAlpine. "When I closed the business I sold off my stock. People have been selling antiquities for years—it's nothing new."

"We absolutely agree that when things are excavated they need archaeologists to document and record them," says Davies. "But once they're dug up and stored, what's the

point in leaving them lying around in dark vaults? It's the important pieces that should be in museums, and we only sell the inexpensive items of which there are plenty more. We're trying to promote care for our historical artefacts, rather than leave them hidden."

So far the company has done a roaring trade. "It was a shock to people to discover these things were available and that there were so many of them," Davies maintains.

Certainly, if you're searching for the ultimate original Christmas present, this is a rich source—for you can be pretty sure no one else will be wrapping up a Biblical-era pot or an Egyptian mask to put under the tree.

JULIA PEARLEY

Ancient Art, 85 The Vale, Southgate, London N14 6AT.
Tel: 0181-882 1509.



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EAST MEETS WEST END

London's restaurant scene is buzzing with exotic influences, so this Christmas forget turkey roast and savour the delights of the Far East.

Suddenly, after decades of languishing in the doldrums, London has transformed itself into a world capital of gastronomy. Cafés, bars and brasseries have been opening at a phenomenal rate. Confident cooking, a wealth of imagination and diverse influences from abroad have become the hallmarks of the capital's restaurant revolution.

It is to these foreign touches of inspiration that anyone in search of a Christmas celebration should turn. Some of the smartest restaurants in town come with exotic monikers: Asian cooking, in particular, is fashionable, and its clientele ever more sophisticated. Forget the turkey and sprouts—unless they're swathed in superior spices.

Ethnic restaurants are, of course, nothing new to London. The first Indian eatery, **Veerawamy**, opened in 1927, founded by a British family of spice traders whose ancestors included a Moghul princess. Sadly this restaurant was, until recently, a shadow of its former self, serving tired buffet food in a faded dining room. Now though, it has been reincarnated. Recently purchased and completely refurbished by Namita Panjabi and Ranjit Methani from Chutney Mary, it has been decorated in bold primary colours and boasts an equally forthright menu. With its arched windows overlooking the lights of Regent Street it will be the place to dine out over the festive season.

Namita is confident that London is ready for her distinctive cuisine. Classic dishes from north India are blended on the menu with creations from the households of the south which she has tracked down on her many visits. "Over the past five years the British palate has grown more sophisticated. People are interested in regional Indian cuisine: they know the difference and they are willing to pay for it." Dishes to try include oyster and chilli fry; mussels steamed with coconut and ginger; Malabar fresh Kingfish curry with turmeric

and raw mango and minced quail with quail eggs in saffron curry.

Namita emphasises however, that Indian food differs in character not just from region to region, but also according to religion and social hierarchy—a point taken up by Atul Kochar, head chef at **Tamarind**, a restaurant at the vanguard of new-wave Indian cuisine. "Even within the same faiths, there are hundreds of varying beliefs, all of which are reflected in food. Brahmins, for example, regard onions and garlic as 'hot' foods, inflaming the passions and to be avoided—a view not necessarily shared by other castes."

Atul defines himself as a north Indian chef, having learnt the art of preparing Moghul food at New Delhi's famous Oberoi Hotel. One of the world's great cuisines, this style of cooking embraces influences from

Persia and Afghanistan, a reflection of countries that fell to these warriors on their sweep from Central Asia into the sub-continent. Atul's speciality is cooking game, a talent given free rein over the Christmas season, when you will find pheasant, partridge or grouse prepared in uniquely Indian fashion. Kebabs—such as seared venison with cardamom, or hare in traditional mild spices—are cooked in the bee-hive clay oven that is now de rigueur at smart London restaurants from the River Café to Moro.

In addition to the two restaurants above, fans of Indian food now have several other excellent choices for dinner. Three recent openings are **Chor Bizarre** in Mayfair, a stunningly decorated dining room designed to evoke the "thieves bazaar" in Delhi for which it is named (with the added pun). Tuck into the

predominantly Kashmiri dishes including velvety lamb specialities from the region's legendary "Wazwan" feast under the canopy of a four poster bed transformed into a table. Savour super-fresh "tak-a-tak" dishes—named for the sound of a metal spatula chopping through meats and vegetables as they are swiftly seared on a flat, iron griddle.

Equally individual is **Soho Spice** on Wardour Street, whose brasserie atmosphere is enhanced by the modern Indian art set out on its walls. This 200-seater restaurant serves expertly-cooked dishes whose names will be comfortably familiar to most diners: delicious dhals, prawn curries and dosas. Soho Spice comes from the same stable as the well-known **Red Fort**, which is offering a special Christmas Day menu. Why not ring the changes with a lunch or dinner menu that centres on turkey Kali Mirch—a north Indian treatment of the festive bird simmered in a tomato, ginger and garlic sauce.

At **Vama—The Indian Room**, in Chelsea, well-known dishes are given special treatment: try the tender murgh malai kebab or well-spiced murgh tikka. From the tandoor oven come raan—a whole leg of lamb studded with cloves and coated with papaya, and game dishes including wood pigeon and pheasant. Vama is Sanskrit for "woman" and the restaurant's ochre-stained walls are hung with large oil-paintings of women from throughout India.

The other great Asian cuisine is Chinese, or more specifically, Cantonese. Among the hundreds of London restaurants which purport to serve this cuisine from the country's southern rice belt, only a handful can claim any authenticity. One such, however, is **Ming** in Greek Street. A treat at any time of year, this lively yet elegant restaurant treats Christmas seriously, with special dishes including red curd duck Hakka-style, set out beneath the decorations. Try classical dishes such as sizzling prawns with fresh mango or pan-fried beef with coriander and onion pancakes. New Year's Eve is particular fun: a lavish



The Dorchester's Oriental Restaurant, above, for Michelin-star-winning Chinese delicacies. Soho Spice, right, a richly colourful setting for expert Indian cuisine.





Nobu, in the Metropolitan, where the food is an eclectic mix of Japanese and Peruvian and the clientele amongst the most fashionable in town.
Chor Bizarre, legendary Kashmiri dishes, in a delightful and extraordinary setting.

popular for Christmas parties. And what else to order but the Imperial Touch menu, which at £82 per person embraces such delicacies as double-boiled shark's fin soup with chicken and hearts of Chinese cabbage; stir-fried scallops with pine nuts and conpoy in a bean thread basket, and hot pot of braised aubergines with salted fish and chicken. The Oriental's clientele are largely regulars who "don't look at the menu—they just order". As Jimmy says: "Clients here travel the world. They know what the cuisine's all about." But even so, favourites such as Peking duck and Szechuan prawns are on the menu for the many guests who can't do without them.

The Dorchester goes to town at Christmas, with trees, trimmings and carol singers beyond the famous fairy lights outside its door. But just a chopstick's throw away is **Nobu** in the Metropolitan hotel, the chicest restaurant to open in London for many years. Nobu is far too fashionable to concern itself with Christmas: go there for an antidote to anything flash or festive. An eclectic mix of Japanese and Peruvian cuisine, it blazes an imaginative trail through British cooking: a stunning range of Andean skewered meat (*anti-cuchos*), seared sashimi, slivers of raw fish (similar to ceviche) with hot and sweet

set dinner comes to a close at midnight with Champagne and a Scottish piper—the best of east and west.

At the Dorchester's **Oriental Restaurant**, chef Simon Yung's delicacies have won a Michelin star, a rare honour for a non-French dining room. Simon's staff is entirely

Chinese and one look at Simon's super-powerful turbo-woks—which turn red-hot on full heat—show that no expense has been spared to ensure the highest standards of authenticity.

Restaurant manager Jimmy Man looks after the main dining room and three private areas which are highly

sauces and some spectacular desserts. The secret of Nobu's success, says head chef Mark Edwards is fresh ideas and ingredients. "We buy live turbot: it's still flapping in the sink an hour before it's on your plate." Tuna comes from the Mediterranean, from a small group of fishermen who catch sushi-standard fish and prepare it on board. It may not come cheap, but you are assuredly enjoying the best.

And splashing out on top quality is, after all, what Christmas is all about. Throw in a dash of novelty and you've got yourself a party!

BILL KNOTT

DINING OUT

Chor Bizarre, 16 Albemarle Street, W1. Tel: 0171-629 9802. Dinner £30 per head.

Ming, 35 Greek Street, W1. Tel: 0171-734 2721. Dinner £20-25 per head.

Nobu, The Metropolitan, 19 Old Park Lane, W1. Tel: 0171-447 4747. Dinner £50 per head.

Red Fort, 77 Dean Street, W1. Tel: 0171-437 2115. Christmas Day menu £50 per head.

Soho Spice, 124, Wardour Street, W1. Tel: 0171-434 0808. Three-course menus, £14.95 per head. Special Christmas party menus for groups.

Tamarind, 20 Queen Street, W1. Tel: 0171-629 3561. Dinner £30 per head.

The Oriental Restaurant at the Dorchester, Park Lane, W1. Tel: 0171-629 8888. Special menus from £37 per head.

Vama—The Indian Room, 438 King's Road, SW10. Tel: 0171-351 4118. Christmas party menus from £35 per head.

Veerawamy, 101 Regent Street, W1. Tel: 0171-734 1401. Live jazz bands will perform during the run-up to Christmas and the New Year. Dinner £25 per head.

DINING IN

For those eating at home, we asked three chefs to provide recipes for dishes that top their seasonal bill of fare.

**ATUL KOCHAR'S
SAILANA TITAR
(Marinated roast partridge)**
Sailana was a kingdom in the heart of India, known for its game hunting. This recipe is a tribute to the region's royal family who made an enormous contribution to Indian gastronomy.

I partridge
3 tbsp malt vinegar
pinch of salt
2 tsp ginger and garlic paste
1 tsp red chilli powder
For the marinade
100g yoghurt
2 tsp ginger and garlic paste
2 tbsp mint and coriander paste
2 tsp green chilli paste
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp garam masala
pinch of star anise powder
pinch of ground mace
3 tbsp sunflower oil

Skin the partridge and make deep cuts in the breasts and legs. Mix the vinegar, salt, ginger and garlic paste and chilli powder together and rub evenly over the partridge. Leave for 20 minutes. Mix the marinade ingredients together, put the partridge in it and let it stand for at least four hours before cooking.

Skewer the partridge, from tail to head. Keep a tray underneath to catch the drippings. Roast in a moderately hot tandoor for 9 minutes, a charcoal grill for 8 minutes, or a hot (220°C/400°F/gas mark 6) oven for 10 minutes.

Remove and hang to allow the excess moisture to drip off, then baste with the juices and return to the oven for 3-4 minutes.

To serve, divide the bird in two along the backbone, accompany with rice and vegetables of your choice. Serves 2

CHRISTINE MING'S RED CURD DUCK HAKKA-STYLE
1 duck, cleaned and air-dried overnight
4 cloves of garlic
4 bulbs of spring onion
knob of fresh ginger
2 tsp sunflower oil
1 piece dry tangerine peel, soaked and sliced
3 bricks of red beancurd
5 tbsp light soy sauce
2 tbsp dark soy sauce

Finely chop the garlic, spring onion and ginger, then heat the oil in a wok and stir-fry until the garlic is golden. Add the tangerine peel. Break up the beancurd and add it to the wok for 30 seconds. Turn up the heat and fry the duck on both sides until golden. Add the soy sauces and enough water to cover half the duck. Simmer on a low heat for 2 hours. To serve, joint the duck and serve with the gravy and rice. Serves 4-6

NOBU'S NEW-STYLE SASHIMI
4oz sashimi-quality fresh fish
½ tsp minced garlic
Julienne of ginger, to taste
chives cut into 1-inch lengths, to taste
2 tsp soy sauce
2 tsp lemon juice
½ tsp roasted sesame seeds
2 tbsp extra virgin oil
1 tbsp sesame oil

With a very sharp knife, thinly slice the fish, on the bias, and arrange in a circle on a plate. Rub the fish with the garlic, put the ginger and chives over the fish, followed by the soy, lemon juice and sesame seeds. Heat the oils together in a small pan until they begin to smoke, then carefully pour over the fish, searing the flesh as it makes contact. Serves 2

HOT TICKETS FOR A COOL YULE!

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Seasonal shows:

Among those on offer are the traditional *Aladdin*, the musical *Bugsy Malone* & the thrills of *Treasure Island*.

THEATRE

Children can fly to Never Land with Peter Pan & boo Ian McKellen as Captain Hook or travel to 1920s New York & avoid the custard cream-firing splurge guns of Bugsy Malone. The Merry Wives of Windsor are out for revenge as are the chorus girls of *Chicago*. An antidote to the seasonal jollity is provided by the RSC with intense stagings of *Hamlet* & Ibsen's *Little Eyolf*.

Addresses & telephone numbers are given on the first occasion a theatre's entry appears.

CHRISTMAS & CHILDREN'S SHOWS

Aladdin. The genie pops out of the magic lamp for Dennis Waterman, Peggy Mount & Patti Boulaye. *Hackney Empire*, 291 Mare St, E8 (0171-985 2424).

Alegria. The latest spectacular by the multi-national troupe Cirque du Soleil. Opens Jan 7. *Albert Hall, Kensington Gore, SW7* (0171-589 8212).

Babes in the Wood. A traditional Victorian pantomime performed in one of London's last music halls. Nov 27-Feb 8. *Players' Theatre, Villiers St, WC2* (0171-839 1134).

Beauty & the Beast.

Entertaining big-budget adaptation of the tuneful Disney cartoon. *Dominion, Tottenham Cl Rd, W1* (0171-656 1889).

Bugsy Malone.

The National

Youth Music Theatre stages the film musical which spoofs gangster movies, performed by an 84-strong cast of 11- to 16-year-olds. Nov 15-Jan 10. *Queen's, Shaftesbury Ave, W1* (0171-494 5040).

Cinderella. A witty reworking of the rags-to-riches story. Nov 22-Jan 17. *Unicorn Theatre, Great Newport St, WC2* (0171-836 3334).

Cinderella. With Linzi Hateley, Wayne Sleep as Buttons & Dora Bryan as the Fairy Godmother. Dec 12-Jan 4. *Yvonne Arnaud, Guildford, Surrey* (01483 440000).

Cinderella. Linda Robson from TV's *Birds of a Feather* leads the cast. Dec 12-Jan 18. *Ashcroft, Croydon, Surrey* (0181-688 9291).

David Copperfield. Dickens' novel about an orphan's growth to manhood, adapted by Matthew Francis. Dec 5-Jan 24. *Greenwich Theatre, Crooms Hill, SE10* (0181-858 7755).

Dick Whittington. With John Nettles, Lesley Joseph, Jeffrey Holland & Bill Pertwee. Dec 13-Jan 25. *Wimbledon Theatre, 93 The Broadway*,

SW19 (0181-540 0362).

Hansel & Gretel. A raucous rendering of the dark tale. Nov 29-Jan 26. *Theatre Royal, Stratford East, Gerry Raffles Sq, E15* (0181-534 0310).

The House that Sooty Built.

Glove puppets for the very young. Dec 19-23 & 27-30; Jan 2 & 3. *Bloomsbury Theatre, Gordon St, WC1* (0171-388 8822).

The IMAX Nutcracker. The classic fairy tale unfolds in a present-day setting on 3D film, on a screen five storeys high & the width of an Olympic swimming pool. Dec 12. *IMAX Cinema, Pepsi Trocadero, Piccadilly Circus, W1* (0845 6000505).

Jack & the Beanstalk. With Matthew Kelly, Toyah Willcox, Vicki Michelle & Postman Pat. Dec 11-Jan 18. *Churchill, Bromley, Kent* (0181-460 6677).

More Grimm Tales. Stories with a sinister edge from the Brothers Grimm, directed by Tim Supple. Nov 24-Jan 31. *Young Vic, The Cut, SE1* (0171-928 6363).

Peter Pan. Ian McKellen plays Captain Hook in Trevor Nunn & John Caird's new adaptation of J M Barrie's fantasy. With Alec





Little Eyolf: Joanne Pearce, Robert Glenister & Damian Stoney create an intense portrait of a marriage.

McCowen & Clive Rowe. Dec 8-Jan 3. *Olivier*, National Theatre, South Bank, SE1 (0171-928 2252).

Puss in Boots. An exuberant version by award-winning children's author Philip Pullman. Nov 20-Feb 7. *240 The Broadway*, Wimbledon, SW19 (0181-543 4888).

Robinson Crusoe. David Essex plays the shipwrecked mariner. Dec 12-Jan 24. *Richmond Theatre*, Richmond, Surrey (0181-940 0088).

Treasure Island. Neil Bartlett adapts R L Stevenson's piratical yarn. Dec 5-Jan 17. *Lyric Hammersmith*, King St, W6 (0181-741 2311).

REGULAR SHOWS

The Chairs. Ionesco's absurdist play had its first major production at the Royal Court 40 years ago, & has been regarded as both a tragic farce & a study in nothingness. In a new translation by Martin Crimp,



An Enemy of the People: Ian McKellen as Ibsen's equivocal hero.
Othello: David Harewood is the charismatic Moor & Claire Skinner his fragile wife.

Richard Briers & Geraldine McEwan play an old couple on an island who pass their time with private games & vague memories. Directed by Théâtre de Complicité's Simon McBurney, it's certain to be inventive & intriguing. Nov 19-Dec 20. *Royal Court Downstairs at the Duke of York's, St Martin's Lane*, WC2 (0171-565 5000).

Chicago. This revival of John Kander & Fred Ebb's 1975 musical about love, murder & fame is based on a recent witty, gritty Broadway success. Ruthie Henshall & Ute Lemper play two chorus girls with deadly revenge on their minds. The versatile Henry Goodman appears as their wily lawyer. Opens Nov 18. *Adelphi, Strand*, WC2 (0171-344 0055).

A Delicate Balance. Maggie Smith heads the cast for Anthony Page's production of Edward Albee's 1966 Pulitzer Prize-winning play about an elderly Connecticut couple whose relationship is put under strain by their quarrelling children & old friends who invite themselves for an extended stay. With Eileen Atkins, John Standing, James Laurenson, Sian Thomas & Annette Crosbie. *Theatre Royal, Haymarket*, SW1 (0171-930 8800).

Electra. Frank McGuinness provides a lively new translation for Sophocles' Greek tragedy of revenge & remorse which is staged with understated power by David

Leveaux. Zoë Wanamaker plays the title role as the daughter of murdered Agamemnon & shows, with genuine tragic power, the damage that grief & hatred can wreak on the heart, mind & body. Played out on a sparse set that hints at modern-day conflicts, it is a gripping & sensitive production. Until Dec 5. *Donmar Warehouse*, Earls Court, WC2 (0171-369 1732).

An Enemy of the People. Christopher Hampton's illuminating new translation of Ibsen's drama is staged lavishly by Trevor Nunn whose use of bustling crowd scenes & elaborate scenery occasionally distracts from the stronger domestic scenes. Ian McKellen impresses as the small-town doctor who exposes disease & corruption, an equivocal hero of ideals & disturbing fanaticism. There is good support, too, from Stephen Moore as his calculating brother (their scenes together crackle with sibling rivalry) & Alan Cox as a manipulative editor. *Olivier*, National Theatre.

The Front Page. Ben Hecht & Charles MacArthur's 1928 Broadway comedy hasn't been seen in London since a National Theatre production in 1972. Now Sam Mendes stages this witty, fast-moving farce about Chicago newspapermen in the 1920s. Opens Dec 15. *Donmar Warehouse*.

Hamlet. Matthew Warchus has drawn from three existing versions & cut & rearranged scenes to create a lively reappraisal of the play. Shorn of Stratford makes it worthy of our attention. It's an intense portrait of a marriage in which a couple are consumed by guilt & mutual recrimination about the death of their son. In a superb cast,

David Harewood's muscular, charismatic Othello & Claire Skinner's fragile Desdemona make a well-contrasted couple, while Simon Russell Beale is outstanding as the cunning & loathsome Iago. The play's themes of war & racism work well in the modern setting of a production which is full of well-judged detail.

Taut, exciting & moving, this is Shakespeare made fresh. *Cottesloe, National Theatre*.

Scissor Happy. Based on a long-running American hit, this comedy whodunit lets the audience play detective to solve the murder of an eccentric concert pianist in a Covent Garden hairdressing salon.

The Merry Wives of Windsor. Leslie Phillips appears as a raffish, urbane Falstaff who is more louche lady-killer than bar-room brawler. His pursuit of two wealthy Windsor wives & their plans to humiliate him provide plenty of pranks & jokester revenge which, under Ian Judge's leisurely direction, gently amuse. An attractive autumnal set & appealing players, including Susannah York & Joanna McCallum as the scheming wives & Guy Henry as a hilariously deranged French doctor, help to make it amiable fun for the Christmas season. Opens Dec 17. *Barbican Theatre, Barbican*.

electrifying performance by Alex Jennings as the tortured prince, who veers between irony & rage. An exciting production—but it's not for the traditionalists. Opens Dec 4. *Barbican Theatre, Barbican*, EC2 (0171-638 8891).

The Invention of Love. Tom Stoppard uses the life of acerbic classical scholar & lyric poet A E Housman to muse on academics, aesthetics & male friendship. The dead poet recalls his life from Hades in a witty, dreamlike play full of elaborate speeches & academic debate in which the most touching moment comes when the deceased Housman (John Wood) meets his younger self Paul Rhys). Some may find the philosophy outweighing the passion, but it's never less than stimulating, & there are superb performances from Wood & Rhys under Richard Eyre's direction. *Cottesloe, National Theatre*, South Bank, SE1 (0171-928 2252).

A Letter of Resignation. Hugh Whitemore explores the political morality of the 1960s in his new play which focuses on Harold Macmillan at the time of the Profumo scandal. Edward Fox & Clare Higgins head the cast. *Comedy, Panton St, SW1* (0171-369 1731).

Little Eyolf. This late play by Ibsen has been rarely performed due to its heavy mixture of gloom & weighty symbolism, but Adrian Noble's RSC revival from Stratford makes it worthy of our attention. It's an intense portrait of a marriage in which a couple are consumed by guilt & mutual recrimination about the death of their son. In a superb cast,

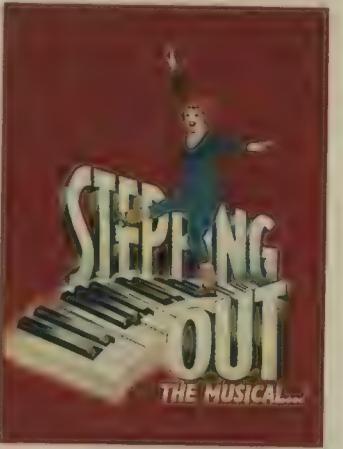
David Harewood's muscular, charismatic Othello & Claire Skinner's fragile Desdemona make a well-contrasted couple, while Simon Russell Beale is outstanding as the cunning & loathsome Iago. The play's themes of war & racism work well in the modern setting of a production which is full of well-judged detail.

Taut, exciting & moving, this is Shakespeare made fresh. *Cottesloe, National Theatre*.

Joanne Pearce's volatile, sensual wife & Robert Glenister's idealistic husband are outstanding. Opens Dec 15. *The Pit, Barbican*, EC2 (0171-638 8891).

The Merry Wives of Windsor. Experienced improvisational comedy actors Lee Simpson & Jim Sweeney are among the cast who will follow the audience's suggestions in pursuit of the killer. *Duchess, Catherine St, WC2* (0171-494 5075).

She Knows You Know! Jean Fergusson, one of the regular cast of



Stepping Out: This all-dancing comedy returns to the West End with song.

Last of the Summer Wine, performs her own show about Lancashire comedienne Hylda Baker whose 60-year career ranged from music hall to TV sitcoms. Until Dec 7. *Vaudeville, Strand*, WC2 (0171-836 9987).

Stepping Out: The Musical. Richard Harris has reworked his 1984 comedy in which a disparate group of amateur tap-dancers meet each week to rehearse for a gala charity performance. Original director Julia McKenzie oversees a cast which includes Liz Robertson, Caroline Pickles & Helen Cotterill.

Now that the show has songs, it seems more than ever like a suburban *Chorus Line*. *Albery, St Martin's Lane*, WC2 (0171-369 1730).

OUT OF TOWN

RSC season at Stratford: **Twelfth Night**, directed by Adrian Noble, with David Calder & Clare Holman, opens Nov 19; **The Merchant of Venice**, directed by Gregory Doran, opens Dec 4. At the Swan: **Romeo & Juliet**, directed by Michael

Attenborough, with Ray Feron & Zoë Waites, opens Nov 18; **Bartholomew Fair** by Ben Jonson, directed by Laurence Boswell, opens Dec 4. At

The Other Place: **Roberto Zucco** by Bernard-Marie Koltès, directed by James Macdonald, opens Nov 26; **Goodnight Children Everywhere** by Richard Nelson opens Dec 11. *Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon*, Warwickshire CV37 6BB (01789 295623).

IAN JOHNS

CINEMA

The 41st London Film Festival opens on November 6 with *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, the new British film starring Richard E Grant & Helena Bonham Carter, & closes 17 nights later with *One Night Stand*, an American film written, directed & scored by the multi-talented Briton Mike Figgis. Among the big films available this autumn are Jean-Jacques Annaud's long-awaited spectacular yarn *Seven Years in Tibet*, a fourth *Alien* film with Sigourney Weaver, & a new James Bond adventure with Pierce Brosnan, *Tomorrow Never Dies*.

Alien Resurrection. Sigourney Weaver for the fourth time takes on the horrors of outer space, after first having to be cloned back into existence. She teams up for the ordeal with some space smugglers who include Winona Ryder. The director, attempting to give the well-worn material a new look, is Jean-Pierre Jeunet. Opens Nov 28.

Chasing Amy. The American independent writer-director Kevin Smith, whose *Clerks* was a surprise hit in 1994, completes his New Jersey trilogy with this engaging comedy-drama in which two cult-comic-book artists encounter a female in the same business. One of them becomes desperately smitten with her even though she is gay. The principals are Ben Affleck, Jason Lee & Joey Lauren Adams. Opens Nov 21.

Lawn Dogs. A 10-year-old girl in a middle-class district of Louisville befriends the young man who mows the lawns of the prosperous residents, in spite of their differences in background causing uncomfortable flutterings with the neighbours. John Duigan's film sends up the myth of the American classless society, & contains a deliciously accomplished performance by Mischa Barton as the girl. Opens Nov 21.

The Myth of Fingerprints. Superficially contented & prosperous, a New England family reunites for



8 Heads in a Duffel Bag: A black comedy of errors.





Seven Years in Tibet:
Heinrich Harrer befriends
the 11-year-old Dalai Lama.

Thanksgiving, but tensions quickly surface. Roy Scheider & Blythe Danner, the parents, look on as their grown-up children bicker & reveal unsuspected frustrations in Bart Freundlich's domestic drama, with Noah Wyle (from *ER*) as the youngest son returned after a three-year absence. Opens Nov 28.
One Night Stand. Wesley Snipes makes his living directing commercials & is happily married. On a trip to New York he has a brief affair with a married woman (Nastassja Kinski). A year later on a return visit to comfort a friend (Bob Downey Jr) who is fatally ill with AIDS he runs into her again. Mike Figgis wrote & directed this cleverly-plotted, superbly-acted film & also composed the score. Opens Nov 28.

• HIGHLIGHT •

Seven Years In Tibet. Brad Pitt plays Heinrich Harrer, the Austrian climber who after wartime internment in northern India escaped to Tibet in 1944 with his colleague Peter Aufschnaiter (played by David Thewlis). There he befriends the 11-year-old Dalai Lama, becoming his tutor & companion until the Chinese invasion in 1951. Jean-Jacques Annaud's film is a spectacular, rugged adventure, as well as a moving story, arduously shot on Andean locations. Opens Nov 21.

The Tango Lesson. Sally Potter both directs & plays the lead as a filmmaker who, having learned the tango, attempts to turn her mentor (Pablo Varon) into a movie star. Falling in love with him complicates matters. Location shooting in Buenos Aires, London & Paris, & dazzling dance sequences, enliven a highly original work. Opens Nov 28.

Tomorrow Never Dies. In Pierce

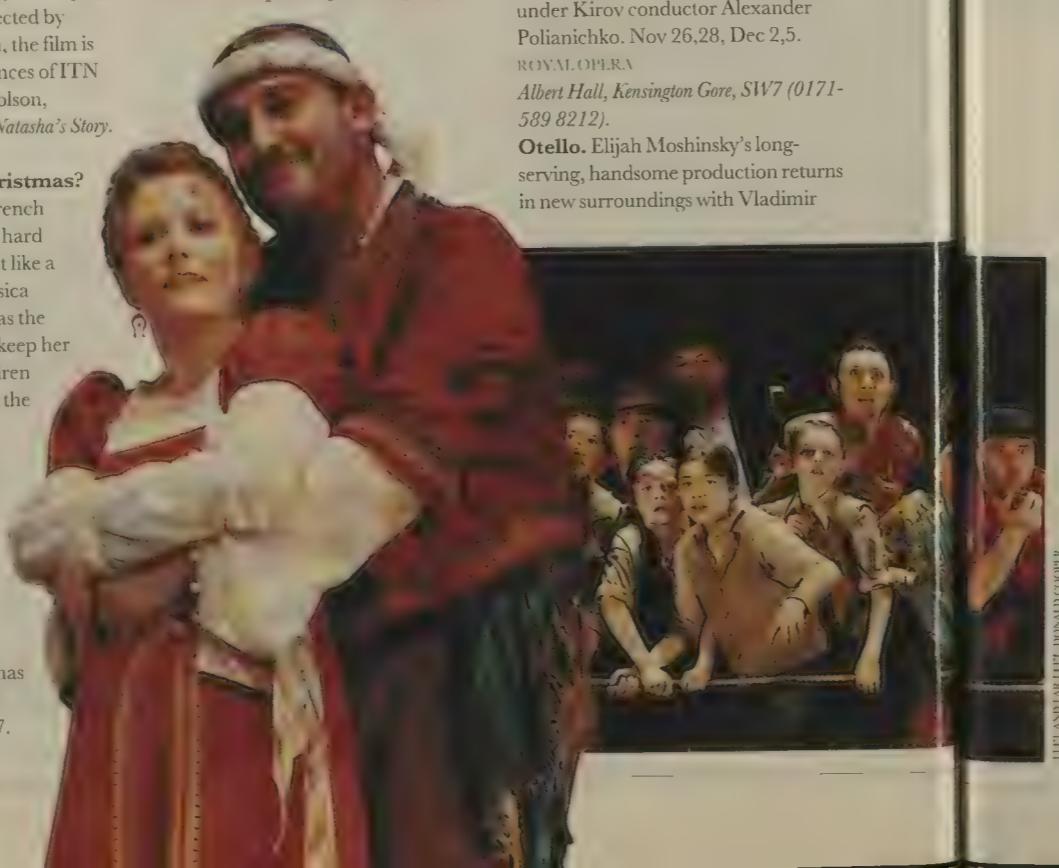


Le Comte Ory: Barry Banks makes ardent advances to Anna Maria Panzarella.

OPERA

English National presents Verdi's heart-warming comedy *Falstaff* while the Royal Opera offers a new production of the perennially popular *Barber of Seville* at the Shaftesbury Theatre & moves on to its next port of call, the Albert Hall, for *Otello*. The well-loved pantomime tale, *Cinderella*, is retold in Rossini's version by English Touring Opera. Welsh National stages Monteverdi's *Coronation of Poppea*.

Die Entführung aus dem Serail: Mary Hegarty & Jeffrey Lloyd-Roberts.
Carmen: Welsh National revives its powerful staging.



ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA
London Coliseum, St Martin's Lane, WC2 (0171-632 8300).

From the House of the Dead. Brad Cohen, making his house debut, conducts Tim Albery's production of Janácek's profoundly moving opera set in a Siberian labour camp. Performed in a double bill with Mark-Anthony Turnage's new work *Twice Through the Heart*. Nov 11, 13.

The Magic Flute. Christopher Moulds conducts a new cast in one of the company's favourite productions. Nov 14, 20, 22, 25, 29, Dec 4, 6.

Falstaff. Oliver von Dohnányi makes his house debut conducting Verdi's final masterpiece, directed by Matthew Warchus, with Alan Opie singing the fat knight, Rita Cullis as Alice Ford, Sarah Connolly as Meg Page, Catherine Wyn-Rogers as Mistress Quickly, Keith Latham as Ford. Nov 15, 19, 21, 24, 27, Dec 1, 3.

Eugene Onegin. Andrew Schröder makes his house debut in the title role, with Vivian Tierney as Tatyana, in Julia Hollander's staging, under Kirov conductor Alexander Polianichko. Nov 26, 28, Dec 2, 5.

ROYAL OPERA

Albert Hall, Kensington Gore, SW7 (0171-589 8212).

Otello. Elijah Moshinsky's long-serving, handsome production returns in new surroundings with Vladimir



Norma: Anne Mason as the heroine's rival, Adalgisa.

Stephen Medcalf's staging. Opera House, Buxton (01298 72190); Nov 11-15. Anvil, Basingstoke (01256 844244); Nov 18-22. Grand, Wolverhampton (01902 429212); Nov 24-25. Playhouse, Weston-Super-Mare (01934 645544); Nov 27-29.

• HIGHLIGHT •

Le Comte Ory. This summer's rollicking success returns with tighter direction & Barry Banks soaring with ease to the vocal heights of the title role; Anna Maria Panzarella sings with expressive lyricism as Countess Adèle. Imelda Drumm is a personable Isolier, Christopher Maltman a sonorous Raimbaud & Ivor Bolton conducts with brio. Well worth travelling to catch such an enjoyable performance.

Die Entführung aus dem Serail.

Richard Farnes conducts a musically satisfying revival in William Dudley's suitably claustrophobic trellis-work sets. Jeffrey Lloyd-Roberts as Pedrillo & Mary Hegarty as Blonde form a lively, well-matched couple; Gregory Frank has the exact vocal & dramatic measure of Osmin, & Carlo Vincenzo Allemano is a persuasive Belmonte.

The Makropulos Case. Kristine Ciesinski portrays the 300-year-old Elina Makropoulos, who has passed through innumerable reincarnations to become the world-weary Emilia Marty, in Nikolaus Lehnhoff's fine staging of Janácek's haunting opera. Apollo, Oxford (01865 244544); Nov 11-15. Palace, Manchester (0161-242 2503); Nov 18-22. Theatre Royal, Plymouth (01752 267222); Nov 25-29. Mayflower, Southampton (01703 711811); Dec 2-6. *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* only, Derngate, Northampton (01604 24811); Dec 9, 11.

SCOTTISH OPERA
The Magic Flute. With Eric Roberts as Papageno, Jamie MacDougall as Tamino, Margaret Preece as Pamina, Clive Bayley as Sarastro in Annabel Arden's staging, conducted by Brad Cohen. Grand Theatre, Leeds (0113 222 6222). Dec 17, 20, Jan 20, 23, 27, 29.

Norma. Frances Gainsberg sings the tragic Druid priestess.

Rigoletto. With Macedonian baritone Boris Trajanov as Rigoletto, Paul Charles Clarke as the Duke.

Peter Grimes. Jeffrey Lawton portrays the psychotic fisherman. Alhambra, Bradford (01274 752000). Nov 11-15.

Tosca. Elizabeth Byrne sings the title role, with Ian Storey as Cavaradossi & Matthew Best as Scarpia in Anthony Besch's production. Theatre Royal, Glasgow (0141-332 9000); Dec 12, 16, 18, 20, 23, 27(m).

WELSH NATIONAL OPERA

Fidelio. Suzanne Murphy sings Leonore in a new production by Patrice Caubier & Moshe Leiser, conducted by Carlo Rizzi.

La Clemenza di Tito. Charles Mackerras conducts, with Katarina Karneus as Sextus.

Carmen. Patricia Bardon sings the lead in Caubier & Leiser's fine staging. Empire, Liverpool (0151-709 1555); Nov 11-15. Hippodrome, Bristol (0117 929 9444); Nov 18-22.

The Coronation of Poppea. New production by David Alden, with Catrin Wyn-Davies as Poppea & Paul Nilson as Nero. New Theatre, Cardiff (01222 878889); Dec 11, 13.

A TRIO OF ROSINAS FOR THE ROYAL OPERA

Rossini's opera *Il barbiere di Siviglia* is one of the most popular works in the repertory—even non-opera-goers are familiar with the wily barber's tongue-twisting aria "Largo al factotum". During the Royal Opera's two years "on the road" it is staging this crowd-puller for its season at the Shaftesbury Theatre.

Over the years, every famous mezzo-soprano of the day—and even some sopranos—have sung the role of Rosina, the high-spirited heroine who relies on the resourceful Figaro to effect her escape from the clutches of her guardian, Dr Bartolo, into the waiting arms of the smitten Count Almaviva. Audiences will be able to hear no fewer than three mezzo-sopranos new to London—all young singers at the beginning of their careers—in this role.

First comes Carmen Oprisanu (far right), a Romanian whose repertory in addition to Rossini heroines Rosina and Isabella includes Massenet's Charlotte & Mozart's Sesto. She is followed by Sonia Ganassi (near right), an Italian whose career has already taken her to a number of the major opera houses in that country as well as to Vienna and the USA where she has sung in the Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini repertory. She comes to London fresh from this year's Rossini festival in Pesaro and the

New York Metropolitan Opera, at both of which she sang the role of Rosina. Sophie Koch (below centre) is from France, where she has studied under the great French mezzo Jane Berbié, and has sung mainly in operas by Mozart and Gounod.

The new production will be directed and designed by Nigel Lowery, whose designs for the Royal Opera's last *Ring* cycle incited a fair degree of shock and horror among the purists. Whatever he has in store for the *Barber*, Rossini's divine comedy, which has flourished for 180 years, will doubtless survive unscathed.

MARGARET DAVIES



LILI AND ALFRED DOWD/DOVER



DANCE

While the Royal Ballet offers Ashton's classical version of *Cinderella*, contemporary choreographers are bringing a new look to traditional favourites—Derek Deane to *The Nutcracker*, Matthew Bourne to *Cinderella*, Michael Rolnick to *The Sleeping Beauty*, Christopher Gable to *Giselle*—& Rambert Dance Company tours its varied modern repertory. Followers of traditional Irish dancing have a choice of the original *Riverdance* & the rival *Lord of the Dance* shows.



• HIGHLIGHT •

Adventures in Motion Pictures. Choreographer Matthew Bourne's up-dated version of Prokofiev's *Cinderella*, with the action transported to London during the Blitz, in designs by Lez Brotherston. Sarah Wildor dances the title role, alternating with Saranne Curtin & Maxine Fone. Adam Cooper is the World War II pilot hero; Lynn Seymour plays the Wicked Stepmother. Until Jan 10. *Piccadilly Theatre, Denman St, W1* (0171-369 1734).

Cinderella: Viviana Durante dances the lead for the Royal Ballet in Ashton's classic production.

English National Ballet. A new production by Derek Deane of Tchaikovsky's perennial favourite *The Nutcracker*, featuring all the familiar and much-loved elements but also including a few surprises of a visual nature. See feature page 18. Dec 8-Jan 10, matinees Sat & Dec 22-Jan 3, no perf Dec 25. *London Coliseum, St Martin's Lane, WC2* (0171-632 8300).

Lord of the Dance. Michael Flatley's Irish dance show returns as an arena spectacular, Jan 15-20, 26-29. *Wembley Arena, Middx* (0181-900 1234).

Paco Peña Flamenco Dance Company. The virtuoso guitarist with his dancers in *Arte Y Pasión*. Nov 18-21, 22(m&e). *Peacock Theatre, Portugal St, WC2* (0171 314 8800).

Riverdance. The phenomenally successful show based on traditional Irish dancing. Nov 6-Jan 10. No perf Dec 24-26, 31, Jan 1, 5. *Labatt's Apollo, Queen Caroline St, W6* (0171-416 6022).

Royal Ballet. Family treats at Christmas include the Ashton double

Cinderella: Lynn Seymour portrays Matthew Bourne's Wicked Stepmother.

bill *Les Patineurs & Tales of Beatrix Potter*. Dec 23, 26, 27, 29, 30, Jan 1, 2, 3, 7pm; Dec 31, 5pm. Also matinées for younger ballet-goers: Matthew Hart's *Peter & the Wolf & Tales of Beatrix Potter*. Dec 26, 27, 29, Jan 3, 2pm; Dec 31, noon. *Cinderella*, Ashton's version, designed by David Walker. Jan 6-9, 12-16, 7.30pm; Jan 10, 17, 2pm & 7pm; Jan 7, 2.30pm. *Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, SE1* (0171-960 4242).

Stars of the Night Gala. All-star charity gala to fund scholarships for students & in celebration of the

with designs by David Blight. *Theatre Royal, Bath* (01225 448844); Nov 10-15. *Wycombe Swan, High Wycombe* (01494 512000); Dec 2-6.

English National Ballet. Derek Deane's new version of *The Nutcracker*, also in London (see above). *Mayflower, Southampton* (01703 711811); Nov 13-18. *Empire, Liverpool* (0151-709 1555); Nov 17-22. *Palace, Manchester* (0161-242 2503); Nov 24-29.

Northern Ballet Theatre. Christopher Gable directs *A Christmas Carol*, with choreography by Massimo



amalgamation of the Royal Academy of Dancing & the Benesh Institute. Featuring Royal Ballet stars plus guests Adam Cooper & Sarah Wildor, Monica Zamora, Agnes Letestu, Margaret Illmann & Robert Tewsey. Nov 16, 7.30pm. *Her Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket, SW1* (tickets from Julia Bennett, 0171-326 8003).

OUT OF TOWN

Birmingham Royal Ballet. David Bintley's new ballet *Edward II*, based on the 1592 play by Christopher Marlowe, to music by John McCabe, costumes by Jasper Conran.

Triple bill: *Serenade*, *Orpheus, The Four Temperaments*. *Hippodrome, Bristol* (0117 929 9444); Nov 11-15. Peter Wright's popular production of *The Nutcracker*. Dec 5-17. *Hippodrome, Birmingham* (0121-622 7486).

City Ballet of London. New production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, featuring choreographer Michael Rolnick's neo-classical interpretation,

The Sleeping Beauty: City Ballet of London's neo-classical interpretation.

Morricone, which is danced to Carl Davis' blend of classical music & carols. *New Victoria, Woking* (01483 761144); Nov 11-15. *Grand, Blackpool* (01253 28372); Nov 25-29. *Alhambra, Bradford* (01274 752000); Dec 2-6. Gable's modern *Giselle*, set in the late 1930s in a community living under martial law. *New Theatre, Hull* (01482 226655); Dec 9-13.

Rambert Dance Company. Repertory includes Didy Veldman's new *Greymatter*, Christopher Bruce's *Stream, Moonshine, Rooster & Swansong*, Jiri Kylian's *No More Play & Petite Mort*, Per Jonsson's *Port for Angels & Paul Taylor's Airs*. *New Theatre, Cardiff* (01222 878880); Nov 12-15. *Theatre Royal, Nottingham* (0115 941 9419); Nov 18-22. *Theatre Royal, Plymouth* (01752 267222); Dec 3-6.

MARGARET DAVIES

MUSIC

At the South Bank, a Royal Gala marks the Queen & the Duke of Edinburgh's golden wedding anniversary; a Prokofiev Festival gives an opportunity to hear the composer's music for the film *Alexander Nevsky* & his rarely-performed opera *Maddalena*. The London Sinfonietta celebrates 30 years of dedication to the music of today. At the Barbican, Colin Davis conducts the LSO in a Sibelius cycle. A new Sunday morning series in the splendid setting of the Wallace Collection introduces some established artists not previously heard in London. The third festival dedicated to St Cecilia, patron saint of music, takes place at Stationers' Hall. Plus Christmas music & lots of opportunities to sing carols.

ALBERT HALL

Kensington Gore, W8 (0171-589 8212).

Nights of the Stars. Jacques Delacôte conducts the Orchestra of the Royal Opera with soloists Agnes Baltsa, Svetlana Vassileva, José Cura, Giuseppe Giacomini, Gino Quilico in operatic excerpts; also surprise items. Nov 16, 20, 7.30pm. **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.** Yehudi Menuhin conducts Arvo Pärt's *Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten*, the London première of Bruch's Violin & Viola Concerto, with Daniel Hope, violin, & Philip Dukes, viola; Beethoven's Symphony No 7, Nov 24; Daniele Gatti conducts Stravinsky's *Circus Polka*, Mussorgsky/Ravel's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky*, Dec 14; 7.30pm.

BARBICAN HALL

Silk St, EC2 (0171-638 8891).

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Pinchas Zukerman is violin soloist & conductor in Elgar's Serenade for Strings, Mozart's Violin Concerto No 5, Brahms' Symphony No 2. Nov 13, 7.15pm.



CHRISTMAS IN THE TOWER OF LONDON

Two new musical attractions at the Tower of London will recreate for visitors the atmosphere during the Christmas season as it was in years gone by.

Festivities begin in the Chapel Royal where the choir will perform works that reflect the history of the medieval palace. The chapel of St Peter ad Vincula will ring out with sacred and secular music composed in the 16th and 17th centuries for royal Christmastides.

Visitors may be surprised not to hear carols of the kind that we associate with Christmas today, but these date from a later period. The first programme will include works for choir and organ by William Byrd, court composer to Queen Elizabeth I, Henry Purcell, who composed for the court of William and Mary, and Thomas Weelkes. The second programme will be devoted to Continental Renaissance music for choir and instruments by Gabrieli, Monteverdi and Praetorius.

On arrival at the Tower, guests will be met by a Yeoman Warder

and taken on a short tour ending at Henry VIII's Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula, on Tower Green.

A second series of events scheduled for the three weekends leading up to Christmas will recreate the festivities that took place in the 13th century in the King's Private Hall, which will be decked with historically-correct boughs of holly and ivy. Costumed guides will describe the different aspects of a medieval Christmas and

the games such as chess, table men and nine men's morris played at court. Musicians will perform madrigals on replica medieval instruments.

Renaissance Christmas in the Chapel Royal, Nov 26, 27, Dec 3, 4, 7pm. Christmas Presentations in the Medieval Palace, Dec 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21. Sat 9am-5pm, Sun 10am-4pm. *Tower of London, EC3 (0171-709 0765).*

MARGARET DAVIES



Joseph Swensen:
Sibelius at the Barbican Hall.

Mikhail Pletnev, piano.
Tchaikovsky, Liszt, Mendelssohn. Nov 16, 4pm.

Sibelius Cycle. Colin Davis conducts the London Symphony Orchestra in Sibelius' symphonies & instrumental music, with soloists Anne-Sophie Mutter, violin, Katarina Dalayman, soprano, Peter Mattei, baritone, Nov 16, 20, 23, 26, 27, 30; Joseph Swensen conducts the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in Sibelius' miniatures, Nov 18; 7.30pm. **Royal Concert.** Yakov Kreizberg conducts Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in the annual concert for the benefit of the Musicians

Katarina Dalayman:
Soloist in the Sibelius cycle at the Barbican Hall.

Benevolent Fund: Brahms, Elgar, Strauss, Stravinsky. Nov 19, 7.30pm.

Max, Britten, Tippett. A two-day celebration of the music of Peter Maxwell Davis, Benjamin Britten & Michael Tippett, with the City of London Sinfonia conducted by Richard Hickox. Includes the London première of Maxwell Davies' *Strathclyde* Concerto for Orchestra & European première of his Oratorio *Job*; the London première of Britten's Suite *King Arthur*. Also pre-concert talks & open rehearsals. Nov 21, 22.

English Chamber Orchestra. Nigel Kennedy is solo violinist & director in Bach's Violin Concerto in A & Concerto for Two Violins. Shuntaro Sato conducts Beethoven's Overture *Egmont* & Violin Concerto. Nov 25, 7.30pm.

Orchestre Révolutionnaire & Romantique. John Eliot Gardiner conducts choruses from *Idomeneo*, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 4, with Robert Levin, fortepiano, Haydn's *Missa in Angustiis* & *Nelsonmesse*. Dec 2, 7.45pm.

Gabrieli Consort & Players. Paul McCreesh conducts Handel's oratorio *Solomon*. Dec 4, 7pm.

Sarah Chang, violin, Charles Abramovic, piano. Sonatas by

Mozart, Strauss & Prokofiev, Chopin's Nocturne in F sharp minor, Sarasate's Carmen Fantasy. Dec 7, 7.30pm.

Evelyn Glennie, percussion, **Philip Smith**, piano. Works by Dave Heath, John Psathas, Leigh Howard Stevens, Nebojsa Zivkovic. Dec 9, 7.30pm. **Northern Sinfonia**, Jean-Bernard

Pommier is conductor & solo pianist in Ravel's Piano Concerto in G, the London première of Diana Burrell's Clarinet Concerto, with Robert Plane, Schumann's Symphony No 2. Dec 11, 7.30pm.

London Symphony Orchestra. Tadaaki Otaka conducts Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 3, with Leif Ove Andsnes, Symphony No 2. Dec 18 & 19, 7.30pm.

FESTIVAL HALL
South Bank Centre, SE1 (0171-960 4242).

Mozart on the Strads. Colin Davis conducts the Royal Academy of Music Sinfonia & Chorus at a gala in joint aid of the RAM's 175th anniversary & Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital at which Maxim Vengerov plays the 1734 Habanek violin & Yuri Bashmet the 1696 Archinto viola, both from the RAM's collection of Stradivari stringed instruments, in a Mozart programme which includes the Sinfonia Concertante K364. Nov 12, 7.30pm.

London Philharmonic Orchestra. Paavo Berglund conducts Bartók's *Deux Images*, Sibelius' Symphony No 7, Brahms' Piano Concerto No 2, with Yefim Bronfman, Nov 13; Mahler's *Das Knaben Wunderhorn*, Nielsen's Symphony No 5, with Jard van Nes, mezzo-soprano, Thomas Quasthoff, baritone, Nov 16; 7.30pm.

BBC Symphony Orchestra. Jiri Belohlávek conducts the UK première of Janacek's Suite from *The Excursions of Mr Broucek*, Martinu's Concerto for Two Pianos & String

Orchestra, Dvorák's Symphony No 9 From the New World; Nov 18, 7.30pm. **Royal Gala.** To mark the golden wedding anniversary of the Queen & the Duke of Edinburgh, a special evening of music & theatre with a Shakespearian theme: works by Weber, Verdi, Berlioz, Prokofiev, Bernstein & Cole Porter, performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Andrew Davis, & soloists. Nov 19, 7.30pm.

Yo-Yo Ma, cello, **Kathryn Stott**, piano, Stravinsky, Brahms, Meyer, Piazzolla. Nov 20, 7.30pm.

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Mark Elder conducts a concert performance of Donizetti's opera *Linda di Chamounix*, sung in Italian, wth Mariella Devia in the title role & Marcello Alvarez as Carlo. Nov 21, 7.30pm.

Stephen Kovacevich, piano. Bach, Brahms, Stephen Montague, Beethoven. Nov 23, 3.30pm.

♦ HIGHLIGHT ♦

Prokofiev Festival. A celebration of one of this century's greatest composers, many of whose major orchestral works will be performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Alexander Lazarev & Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, with Vadim Repin as soloist in the Violin Concertos No 1 & No 2, Nikolai Demidenko as soloist in the Piano Concerto No 5; concert performance of *Maddalena*, with soloists from the Kirov Opera; a projection of the film *Alexander Nevsky* with Prokofiev's soundtrack; & pre-concert events. Nov 25,28,30, Dec 3, 7.30pm.

BBC Concert Orchestra, Brighton Festival Chorus. Barry Wordsworth conducts Sibelius' *Karelia Suite*, Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, with Tasmin Little, Orléans' *Carmina Burana*. Nov 26, 7.30pm.

Philharmonia Orchestra. Claus Peter Flor conducts Beethoven's Overture *Leonora No 2*, Piano Concerto No 5 (Emperor), with Mikhail Pletnev, Symphony No 7. Nov 27, 7.30pm.

Maxim Vengerov, violin, Igor Uryash, piano. Sonatas by Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms. Dec 2, 7.30pm.

London Philharmonic Orchestra. Bernard Haitink conducts Britten's *Les Illuminations*, Mahler's Symphony No 4, Dec 7; Mozart's Piano Concerto K466, with Maria João Pires, Ravel's *Daphnis & Chloe* (complete), Dec 10; 7.30pm.

Mitsuko Uchida, piano. Bach, Chopin, Schubert. Dec 8, 7.30pm.

Philharmonia Orchestra. James Levine conducts Brahms' Tragic Overture, Violin Concerto, with Maxim Vengerov, Symphony No 4,

Dec 12; Verdi's Requiem, with René Fleming, Luciano Pavarotti, Roberto Scanduzzi & Philharmonia Chorus, Dec 17; 7.30pm. **Royal Opera in Concert.** Carlo Rizzi conducts Donizetti's "lost opera" *Elisabetta*, the score of which was found in a basement at Covent Garden, with Andrea Rost in the title role, Dec 16, 7pm.

SEI (0171-222 1061). **Haydn Trio of Vienna.** Schubert, Mendelssohn. Nov 12 & 17, 7.30pm. **Geoffrey Saba, piano.** Berg, Schubert/Prokofiev, Ravel, Chopin. Nov 19, 7.30pm.

Orchestra of St John's 30th birthday gala concert. John Lubbock conducts Rossini, Rodrigo, Faure, Rachmaninov, Beethoven. Nov 25, 7.30pm.

Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Iona Brown directs Purcell, Schubert, Mozart. Nov 27, 7.30pm.

St MARIN IN THE FIELDS Trafalgar Sq, WC2 (0171-702 1377).

Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Iona Brown conducts Purcell, Corelli, Vivaldi, Mozart, Bach, Dec 15; Kenneth Sillito conducts Handel, Albinoni, Telemann, Hindemith, Dvorak, Dec 16, 7.30pm.

STATIONERS' HALL Ave Maria Lane, EC4 (01327 36180).

St Ceciliatide International Festival of Music. Opens & ends with *Alexander's Feast*, Handel's setting of Dryden's ode *The Power of Music*, performed by Fiori Musicali, Nov 16 & 22.

Bernard d'Ascoli plays Chopin. Nov 17.

Schidlof Quartet. Brahms, Schubert. Nov 18.

Tallis Scholars. Peter Phillips directs works by the 15th-century Franco-Flemish composer Ockeghem & his contemporaries Josquin, Isaac & Lassus. Nov 19.

QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL South Bank Centre. **London Sinfonietta 30th Birthday Commissions.** Thomas Ades is conductor & pianist in the London première of his Piano Concerto, programmed with works by three neglected European composers George Enesco, Jean Barraque & Niccolò Castiglioni, Nov 15; Markus Stenz conducts premières of works by Xenakis, Dusapin, Vivier, with Clio Gould, violin, & Evelyn Glennie, percussion, Dec 2; Oliver Knussen conducts premières by Goehr & Wolpe, with Peter Serkin, piano, Dec 13; 7.45pm.

Ambache Chamber Orchestra. Diana Ambache is solo pianist & director in works by Mozart & Marie Granval, Germaine Tailleferre & Louise Farrenc. Nov 19, 7.45pm.

BBC Symphony Orchestra. Jiri Belohlavek conducts Strauss' Sonatina No 1 for Wind, Copland's Clarinet Concerto, Dvorak's Serenade for Strings. Nov 21, 7.45pm.

Chelsea Opera Group Chorus & Orchestra. Andrew Greenwood

Yo-Yo Ma: A recital not to miss at the Festival Hall.



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID BROWNE/BRUNSWICK

St Cecilia: Festival in her honour at Stationers' Hall.

WALLACE COLLECTION Hertford House, Manchester Sq, W1 (0171-935 0687).

Uta Buchheister, mezzo-soprano, **Graham Johnson**, piano. Brahms, Schumann. Nov 16, 11.45am.

WIGMORE HALL

Ave Maria Lane, EC4 (01327 36180).

St Ceciliatide International Festival of Music. Opens &

ends with *Alexander's Feast*, Handel's setting of Dryden's ode *The Power of Music*, performed by Fiori Musicali, Nov 16 & 22.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID BROWNE/BRUNSWICK

ST PAUL'S 300TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

One of the City of London's best-known landmarks is celebrating its tercentenary this year with concerts, exhibitions, services and lectures.

It was on December 2, 1697, that St Paul's Cathedral opened its doors for worship. This great building rose from the ashes of the Gothic cathedral destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. The design by Christopher Wren (left) for the new church was ready only eight days later, although it was to be nine years before the first stone was laid. The east end and the quire were the first areas to open, while the remainder of the structure, including the familiar dome, was completed over the next 13 years.

On December 3, 1997 there will be a special service to commemorate the

300th anniversary, held in the presence of the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Prince of Wales. Music will be performed by the Cathedral Choir and the Parley of Instruments ensemble. Anyone wishing to attend should apply in writing enclosing a stamped addressed envelope.

For those interested in the history of St Paul's, there are two special exhibitions marking the tercentenary. The Triforium area has been opened up to give permanent access for the public to experience the most breathtaking view in the Cathedral, from the west end down the nave. Visitors then continue to the Trophy Room, where Wren's Great Model

(right)

of his earlier design, based on a

Bach, Vivaldi, Corelli & carols. Dec 14, 3.15pm & 7.30pm. **Festival Hall.**

The Celebration of Christmas.

Seasonal music & carols performed by the London Choral Society, readings by celebrities; event in aid of the Mental Health Foundation. Dec 15. **Guildhall, EC (0171-580 0145).**

English Chamber Orchestra,

Tallis Chamber Choir. Handel's

Messiah. Dec 10, 7.30pm. **Barbican.**

St Paul's Cathedral Choir & Chorus, City of London Sinfonia.

Hallelujah Chorus. Dec 10, 6.30pm.

No tickets required. **St Paul's Cathedral.**

Christmas by Candlelight.

Seasonal concerts by the Orchestra of

St John's, Smith Square, featuring

music by Bach, Mozart, Vivaldi

Britten, Handel (*Messiah*, Dec 13),

Poulenc, Prokofiev, Verdi & others.

Nov 23, 4pm. **Abbey Simon,** piano. Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin. Nov 24, 7.30pm. **Abbey Simon.**

Massed Choirs of London Hospitals, with organ, & percussion.

Carols & other music. Dec 13, 3pm &

7.30pm. **Festival Hall.**

Royal Naval College Chapel Orchestra & Choir. Carols &

readings, in aid of Save the Children.

Dec 14, 7pm. **Royal Naval College Chapel, Greenwich (0181-317 8687).**

Mozart Festival Orchestra in period costumes perform Handel,

Water Music. Dec 15, 7.30pm. **Barbican Hall.**

Westminster Abbey Choir.

Britten's *St Nicolas* & carols. Dec 15,

7.30pm. **Barbican Hall.**

Joy to the World. Carols, readings & fun production numbers featuring a cast of over 800, including celebrities, choirs, London Musicians Orchestra & Trumpeters of the Household Division. Dec 16, 7.30pm. **Albert Hall.**

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Bernstein, Strauss, Tchaikovsky,

Puccini & carols for all. Dec 16,

7.30pm. **Barbican Hall.**

City of London Sinfonia, Choir of

Watteau's The Music Party: View the Wallace Collection after the concerts.

London Symphony Orchestra &

Royal Choral Society & London Concert Orchestra. Carols. Dec

19, 7.30pm. **Albert Hall.**

Bach Choir. David Willcocks

conducts family carols. Dec 20, 2pm &

5pm. **Albert Hall.**

Polyphony, Canzona. Handel's

Messiah, Dec 20 & 23; Corelli's

Christmas Concerto, Bach's

Christmas Oratorio (Parts 1, 2, & 3),

Dec 21; 7.30pm. **St John's.**

Huddersfield Choral Society,

London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Handel's *Messiah*. Dec 20, 8pm. **Albert Hall.**

London Symphony Orchestra &

Watteau's The Music Party: View the Wallace Collection after the concerts.

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London Symphony Orchestra &

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Chorus. Humperdinck, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky & carols for all. Dec 20 & 21, 7.30pm. **Barbican.**

London Concert Orchestra.

Popular classics & carols for all. Dec 21, 3pm, Dec 23, 7.30pm. **Barbican.**

King's College Choir,

Philharmonia Orchestra. Choral favourites. Dec 22, 7.30pm. *Albert Hall.*

The Sixteen. Handel's *Messiah*. Dec 22, 7.30pm. *St John's.*

Mozart Festival Orchestra &

Chorus. Handel, Bach, Mozart & carols. Dec 22, 7.30pm. **Barbican.**

Goldsmiths Choral Union,

London Philharmonic

Orchestra. Handel's *Messiah*. Dec 23, 7.30pm. *Albert Hall.*

London Concert Orchestra

Orchestra, Thomas Tallis Choir. Family celebration wth traditional favourites. Dec 24, 2.30pm. *Albert Hall.*

Carols by Candlelight. Mozart Festival Orchestra & Chorus in 18th-century costume. Dec 24, 7pm. *Albert Hall.*

MARGARET DAVIES

EXHIBITIONS

The Victorians' passion for fairy paintings is examined at the Royal Academy this winter. MOMI pays homage to the ghoulish world of Hammer Films, while Frankenstein's creator, Mary Shelley, & her mother are the subjects of a new show at the NPG. The Serpentine Gallery reopens after a £4 million facelift with an exhibition of work by avant-garde Italian artist Piero Manzoni.

Readers are advised to check opening days before making a special journey.

HANKSIDE GALLERY
48 Hopton St, SE1 (0171-928 7521).

Christmas Crackers. Modestly-priced prints, watercolours &

drawings. Dec 6-23. Tues 10am-8pm; Wed-Fri 10am-5pm; Sat, Sun 1-5pm. **BARBICAN ART GALLERY**

Barbican Centre, Silk St, EC2 (0171-382 7105).

James Ensor. Visionary landscapes & hallucinatory images by a Belgian post-Impressionist whose work foreshadowed that of the Surrealists. Until Dec 14.

Don McCullin. Retrospective for one of the world's greatest photojournalists. Until Dec 14.

Mon-Sat 10am-6.45pm (Tues until 5.45pm; Wed until 7.45pm), Sun noon-6.45pm. £5 (admits to both), concessions (& everybody Mon-Fri after 5pm) £3.

BRITISH MUSEUM

Great Russell St, WC1 (0171-636 1555).

Hogarth & His Times: Serious Comedy.

Prints by William Hogarth, showing the artist's use of humour to make serious points about human nature & the reactions to his work since his death. Until Jan 4.

Schilling Bequest. More than 100 drawings, most of them by German old masters such as Schongauer, Baldung & Cranach. Until Jan 4.

Cartier: 1900-39. Spectacular exhibition of jewellery, timepieces & objets d'art—some 227 items in all drawn from private collections & from the company's archives in Paris, London & New York. Until Feb 1. Mon-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 2.30-6pm. Closed Dec 24-26 & Jan 1.

CONTEMPORARY APPLIED ARTS
2 Percy St, W1 (0171-436 2344).

Christmas Presents. New work by young makers, includes jewellery, papier-mâché angels, textiles, sculptural vessels & ceramic tableware. Until Dec 24. Mon-Sat 10.30am-5.30pm.

IONA THOMAS COOPER
Park Walk Gallery, 20 Park Walk, SW10 (0171-351 0410).

A Botanical Year: Watching the Seasons.

Minutely-detailed watercolours by Kate Nessler. Until Nov 29. Mon-Fri 10am-6.30pm, Sat 11am-4.30pm.

DESIGN MUSEUM

Shad Thames, SE1 (0171-378 6055).

Bike: Cycles. A design history of the bicycle, from 1825 to 2000, featuring more than 85 bikes & hundreds of photographs, videos, posters, accessories & items of clothing. Until Mar 22. Mon-Fri 11.30am-6pm; Sat, Sun noon-6pm. £5, concessions £3.75. Closed Dec 25, 26.

DULWICH PICTURE GALLERY

College Rd, SE21 (0181-693 5254).

Tom Phillips RA: Drawing to a Conclusion. Including drawings of Simon Callow & Harrison Birtwistle, & Phillips' illustrations for Dante's *Inferno*. Until Jan 18. Tues-Fri 10am-5pm; Sat 11am-5pm; Sun 2-5pm. £3, OAPs & students £1.50, children (& everybody all day Fri) free. Closed Dec 24-26 & Jan 1.



ILLUSTRATION: JULIA LEE FOR THE SUNDAY TIMES & ILLUSTRATION BY PAULINE

Fairyland in London

There are fairies down at the Royal Academy—and at the Leicester Galleries, too. First recorded 700 years ago, these tiny folk have long been part of our history, literature and musical life, immortalised over the centuries by Shakespeare, the Brothers Grimm and countless Victorian painters and illustrators.

George Cruickshank illustrated Grimms' fairy tales, which were translated into English in 1823. A craze for the occult swept to England from America in the 1840s, and in 1872 drawings said to be "done by spirits" were offered to, and rejected by, the RA's Summer Exhibition.

Shakespeare's fairies provided subjects for Turner and Landseer, as well as for the Scottish painter Joseph Noël Paton. These, as well as book illustrations by Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac and Richard (Dickie) Doyle have fixed the fairy image in our minds.

If you want to acquire your own bit of fairyland, tiptoe along to the Leicester Galleries where Peter Nahum presents some 60 pictures, priced from £400 to £25,000. As well as Paton and Doyle, artists include Richard Doyle's brother Charles (father of Arthur Conan

Doyle), and John Anster Fitzgerald.

The Victorian fascination with fairies extended to the stage, with the popularity of transformation scenes and actors "flying" on wires. Following this theatrical vein, the Royal Academy has commissioned a one-man show during which Simon Callow—as the poet Samuel Coleridge—delivers a monologue on the existence of fairies. For exhibition details, see Listings. In Defence of Fairies, Dec 7, 8.30pm, *Criterion Theatre, Piccadilly Circus, SW1* (0171-369 1737).

ANGELA BIRD



ILLUSTRATION: THE SUNDAY TIMES & ILLUSTRATION BY PAULINE

GALERIE MODERNE

10 Halkin Arcade, Motcomb St, SW1 (0171-245 6907).

René Lalique. Jewellery designs from a recently re-discovered archive, providing a way of purchasing a Lalique work at considerably less cost than that of the jewellery itself. Until Dec 19. Mon-Fri 11am-6pm, (Sat 11am-4pm).

HAYWARD GALLERY

South Bank, SE1 (0171-928 3144).

Objects of Desire: The Modern Still-Life. 100 paintings, objects & sculptures, by

Picasso,

Matisse, Dali,

Warhol &

others,

illustrate the

changes

wrought by

20th-century

European &

American artists in

the 400-year-old tradition of still-life. Until Jan 4. Daily 10am-6pm (Tues, Wed until 8pm). £5, concessions £3.50. Closed Dec 24-26 & Jan 1.

LEICESTER GALLERIES

5 Ryder St, SW1 (0171-930 6059).

Fairy Folk in Fairy Land. Peter Nahum's exhibition includes pixies, hobgoblins, banshees & other fairy folk. Nov 13-Dec 20. Mon-Fri 10am-5pm. See box above.

LEIGHTON HOUSE

12 Holland Park Rd, W14 (0171-602 3316).

Tales from the Arabian Nights. Visual interpretations—from book illustrations to pantomime—showing the

Kate Nessler's watercolours:

At the Jonathan Cooper gallery.



Bike design: Trace the history of the bicycle at the Design Museum.

fascination Sheherazade's narrative held for Victorian society. Dec 15-Jan 10. Sun-Wed 11am-6pm; Thurs, Fri 11am-9pm. £3.50. Closed Dec 25, 26 & Jan 1.

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
South Bank, SE1 (0171-401 2636).

Hammer Horror. Blood-curdling visions of vampires, werewolves & other creepy creatures. Dec 3-May 19. Daily 10am-6pm. £6.25, students £5.25, OAPs & children £4.50. Closed Dec 24-26.

NATIONAL GALLERY

Trafalgar Sq, WC2 (0171-747 2885).

Hogarth's Marriage à la Mode. An examination of the six paintings comprising the artist's "modern moral subject", plus related paintings & engravings. Until Jan 18.

Travelling Companions:

Courbet & Renoir. Contrasting

Hammer Horror:
Chill your blood at MOMI.



© MARY DRAKE

works by these two Impressionists Courbet's *Young Ladies on the Banks of the Seine* & Renoir's *A Nymph by a Stream*. Sainsbury Wing:

Making & Meaning: Holbein's Ambassadors.

The newly-restored painting of the two ambassadors to the Court of King Henry VIII is shown among manuscripts, prints, & objects such as chains, globes & sundials. Until Feb 1. Mon-Sat 10am-6pm (Wed until 8pm), Sun noon-6pm. Closed Dec 24-26 & Jan 1.

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

St Martin's Place, WC2 (0171-306 0055).

Hyenas in Petticoats: Mary Wollstonecraft & Mary Shelley.

Engravings, drawings, manuscripts & first editions by two remarkable women. In 1797 Wollstonecraft died giving birth to her daughter, also Mary, who eloped at 16 with the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley & is remembered as the author of *Frankenstein*. Nov 28-Feb 15.

Sir Henry Raeburn, 1756-1823.

Major loan exhibition of portraits, featuring figures from the Age of Enlightenment, by one of Scotland's best known painters. Until Feb 1. £4, concessions £3.

Mon-Fri 10am-6pm, Sun noon-6pm. Closed Dec 24-26 & Jan 1.

THE QUEEN'S GALLERY

Buckingham Palace Rd, SW1 (0171-839 8168).

Presenting an Image:

Photographs from the Royal Collection.

Images given to members of the British royal family between 1858 & 1935. Until Jan 4. Daily 9.30am-4.30pm. £3.50, OAPs £2.50, children £2. Closed Dec 25 & 26.



Swedish style: Discover the creations of Carl & Karin Larsson at the V&A.

◆ HIGHLIGHT ◆

ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS

Piccadilly, W1 (0171-300 8000). (advance booking on 0171-300 5676).

Victorian Fairy Painting. An exploration of the passion for

fairies & the craze for the supernatural which took hold of artists & writers from the early-19th century until the outbreak of World War I. Nov 13-Feb 8.

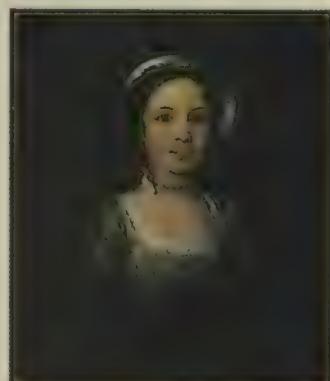
£5.50, concessions £4.50; students & children £3.80.

Daily 10am-6pm. Closed Dec 25. See box.

major exhibition devoted to an Italian artist who died in 1963 but whose 1950s works anticipated the conceptual & performance art of the 60s & 70s. Nov 27-Jan 25. Daily 10am-6pm. Closed Dec 24-6 & Jan 1.

LATL GALLERY

Millbank, SW1 (0171-887 8008).



Portrait of Hanna: Works by Hogarth among centenary gifts at the Tate.

SWEDISH CHRISTMAS AT THE V&A

Sweden comes to the Victoria & Albert Museum this Christmas with a wealth of festive activities and events to complement its exhibition Carl and Karin Larsson: Creators of the Swedish Style.

Cook Anna Mosesson will be hosting a series of culinary workshops throughout December. Learn how to prepare traditional dishes such as *julskinka*, the Christmas ham which is served with *rödkål* (red cabbage). Or how to decorate a table in the style created by Karin Larsson. All the family can join in the fun at the Christmas Delicacies family workshop where you can make decorative baskets and fill them with edible Christmas goodies.

St Lucia's Day, on December 13, is an important date in the Swedish calendar. This festival of light, marking the darkest period of the year, features a choir of children led

by a girl wearing a crown of candles. The V&A will be holding a procession with participants from the Swedish School. Other activities planned for younger visitors include an Activity Cart, and storytelling sessions with tales of the Tomtem, the Swedish version of St Nicholas, a benevolent brownie who distributes presents to good children. Another highlight will be the Christmas party and concert on December 10.

A special late-night opening for the Larsson exhibition and selected galleries will feature jazz entertainment and a Swedish menu in the restaurant. As part of their English tour, the choir of the Academy of Music in Pietå will perform a candlelit concert of Swedish Christmas songs.

Anna Mosesson's Christmas cookery workshop, Dec 3 & 12, 10.30am-12.30pm or 2pm-4pm. £12.50 includes admission to the Museum, Christmas Delicacies



Family Workshop, Dec 6, 10.30am-noon or 1pm-2.30pm. Swedish Christmas Party and Candlelit Concert, Dec 10, 6.30pm-9.30pm.

Admission £3. Concert £4. St Lucia Procession, Dec 13, 3pm-4pm. V&A box office: 0171-938 8407. SARAH NOTTON



Dazzle & Dare: *Taisho* style kimono, one of a dazzling display at the V&A.

Centenary Gifts & Promises. A newly-discovered version of Constable's *The Glebe Farm* & works by Hogarth, de Wint & Yeats feature among 13 items drawn from those already given or willed to the gallery. Nov 25-Feb 22.

Mondrian: Nature to Abstraction. More than 60 works by the great Dutch painter, from early riverscapes to Cubism &, finally, to the mature abstract style of grids & bold primary colours which he developed in the 1920s. Until Nov 30. £5, concessions £3.

The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones & Watts: Symbolism in Britain 1860-1910. The interrelationship of

British & Continental Symbolist art in the late-19th century. Until Jan 4. £6, concessions £3.50.

Daily 10am-5.50pm. Closed Dec 24-26 & Jan 1.

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM
Cromwell Rd, SW7 (0171-938 8349).

Carl & Karin Larsson: Creators of the Swedish Style. Furniture, textiles, watercolours & photographs, plus five room sets from their famous house at Sundborn, show the impact of the Larssons on Swedish design since 1888. Until Jan 18.

Colours of the Indus: Costumes & Textiles of Pakistan. Brilliantly coloured fabrics—from woven silk to cotton dresses—from the 1850s to the present, in celebration of the country's 50th anniversary. Until Mar 29.

Dazzle & Dare: Japanese Kimono in the Taisho Style. Loan

display of 25 of these brilliantly coloured, boldly patterned silk gowns. Until Feb 22.

Zuloaga: Spanish Treasures from the Khalili Collection. The work of Placido Zuloaga (1834-1910), master of the art of damascening, or embellishing metal objects with intricate designs of gold & silver overlay. Until Jan 11.

Mon noon-5.50pm, Tues-Sun 10am-5.50pm. £5, concessions £3; students, children, & everybody from £30-5.50pm, free. Closed Dec 24-26 & Jan 1.

WADDINGTON GALLERIES & OTHERS
Cork St, WI (0171-437 8611).

Cork Street Art Fair. A feast of contemporary art, with some 16 galleries opening their doors to show the work of many different artists. Nov 29, 30. Sat, Sun 11am-6pm.
ANGELA BIRD

ALL SPRUCED UP!

At Christmas Peter Strawson sells 25,000 fir trees. Jonny Beardsall visited his plantation.

"We have the Germans to thank for all this," whispers Peter Strawson as he delicately sets a trip-flare at the end of a row of Christmas trees. He is referring to Queen Victoria's husband Prince Albert, who, it is said, first started our Christmas-tree custom by bringing an evergreen bough indoors—probably a yew—decorated it and arranged it in a pot. This is why Strawson now has 360,000 pines growing on his arable farm in the Lincolnshire Wolds.

With 25,000 trees reaching maturity this Christmas, his security is tight. Four years ago, he recovered a stolen lorry load of trees which had been traced to a local market. These were Noble Fir which now fetch £15 a tree wholesale. "We're rather remote up here," explains the wary 57-year-old farmer. "Thieves think they can work undetected at night but a few infra-red beams and the odd nocturnal patrol deters anyone up to no good."

In mid-November he begins harvesting the crop. By the first week in December all the wholesale orders will have been cut and taken away and by the 15th the retail orders will be almost complete. Few are sold after that but the public enjoy coming to pick, and then to dig, their own trees.

At this time of the year his alarm clock goes off at 6.30am. Just after first light, he briefs his tree sellers—a force of around 20—who then go

out to the forests. Although it is becoming a highly mechanised operation, it's a hands-on time of year when the trees are cut to order.

"Last year we used a wheeled excavator for the first time. It reaches for the trees we've marked and digs them up with their roots." Once they have been lifted clear, a tractor and trailer takes them to the edge of the woods where they are met by the wholesaler with his own wagon. The

days are all too short and Strawson and his boys could be loading under generator lights until nine o'clock.

Twenty years ago, diversifying into trees met with curious glances from his

arable farming neighbours when he allocated 150 acres to plant his first trees. "They thought I was bonkers," he recalls, laughing. They had a point. There is no government subsidy for Christmas trees and little research has been conducted into disease control. Sprays are sold without recommendation, so if growers happen to kill a carefully-nurtured crop of 10-year-old trees, the responsibility is entirely their own.

Strawson grows Norway Spruce—the classic Christmas tree—along with the so-called no-needle-drop varieties like Noble and Nordman Fir Caucasian. The young trees arrive from a nursery when they are four years old and around 25-40cm tall. Using a mechanical planter, he puts in 30,000 trees a year. Inevitably, a percentage is lost in the first one or

When Strawson started to grow Christmas trees, his neighbours thought he was bonkers.



Tree-grower Peter Strawson: All the fun of the fir.

two years to drought, disease or the ravages of rabbits and any gaps are re-planted. Each tree is pruned twice a year, an exhausting task undertaken with a fearsome, long-bladed knife, and harvested in years seven to 10.

When most of us choose our tree, we prefer one with a root, believing it will last longer than one without. But, according to Strawson, "the tree that does best indoors is one that has a clean cut like a fresh flower". He says that a tree should be immersed in water and kept well topped up. Store it outside against a north wall and out

of the sunlight then, when it's time to bring it in, cut ½ inch off the trunk's base, trim any roots and put it in a bucket of watered sand.

If you do buy a tree with roots, you may be planning to plant it in your garden in the New Year. In this case Strawson suggests that you go for a smallish one with plenty of sprouts, which you are assured of if you buy from a plantation where you may "dig your own". It will thrive in a sheltered spot but like most of us over the festive season—a Christmas tree loves a good drink.

GAME, SET AND MATCH

London's best-known concert hall resounds to strings of a different kind this winter, when Bjorn Borg, John McEnroe and other stars of the tennis courts confront one another during the Honda Challenge.

This new London event is part of the Association of Tennis Professionals Senior Tour of Champions, established in the US in 1993 as a singles contest for world-class players who are no longer active on the main professional circuit. This year the ATP Champions Tour has been extended to six European countries—the UK being the final destination, after the Czech Republic, Austria, France, Italy and Germany. During the tour, players accumulate ranking points towards the Nuveen Masters in the US in March.

Others from the tennis élite are Frenchmen Henri Leconte and Yannick Noah, Pat Cash from

Australia, Argentina's Guillermo Vilas, Johan Kriek from South Africa and, as Britain's "wild card", John Lloyd. Divided into two groups of four, they will all play on each of the first three days; the Sunday final will be contested by the winner from each group, with the two group-runners-up participating in a play-off.

An added bonus for London spectators is a doubles fixture in which John Lloyd joins some more of Britain's home-grown heroes—Greg Rusedski, Tim Henman, Jeremy Bates and Andrew Richardson—along with Peter McNamara from Australia, America's Peter Fleming and the Iranian-born Mansour Bahrami.

Honda Challenge, Dec 4-7, Royal Albert Hall, Kensington Gore, SW7 (0171-589 8212).

ANGELA BIRD



COURTESY OF HONDA

SPORT

In an exhilarating start to the rugby season, the England XV meets Australia, New Zealand & world champions South Africa at Twickenham. A new tennis event brings some of the sport's great names to the Albert Hall, while, in less hospitable surroundings, the RAC Rally promises its usual muddy, autumnal thrills.

RUGBY

Reebok Cross Challenge series. Dec 7, Cardiff (0121-440 5000).

European Cross-Country Championships. Dec 13, 14, Lisbon, Portugal (0121-440 5000).

CROQUET

World Championship. The British team, current world champions, defend their title. Nov 7-16, Bunbury, nr Perth, Australia (0171-736 3148).

DARTS

Winmau World Championships. Dec 5, 6, Paragon Hotel, Lillie Rd, SW6 (0181-883 5544).

EQUESTRIANISM

Olympia

International Show Jumping.

Top riders compete in the Christmas Carol Stakes & Mince Pie Puissance. Dec 18-22, Olympia, Hammersmith Rd, W14 (0171-373 3113).

HORSE RACING

Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup. Nov 29, Newbury, Berks (01635 40015).

Tripleprint Gold Cup. Dec 13, Cheltenham, Glos (01242 513014).

King George VI Chase. Dec 26, Kempton Park, Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey (01932 782292).

Coral Welsh National. Dec 27, Chepstow, Gwent (01291 622260).

ICE SKATING

1997 tesa British Ice Figure & Dance Championships. Dec 9-13, Hull Arena, Hull (01482 325252).

MOTOR SPORT

Network Q/RAC Rally. Mid-Wales & the Midlands are the setting, with three stages on the new Silverstone rally circuit, & good spectator points



Motor Racing: Armin Schwarz will take to the open road in the RAC Rally.

on Sunday at Blenheim & Woburn. Nov 22-25. Starts & finishes Cheltenham, Glos (0891 331 331).

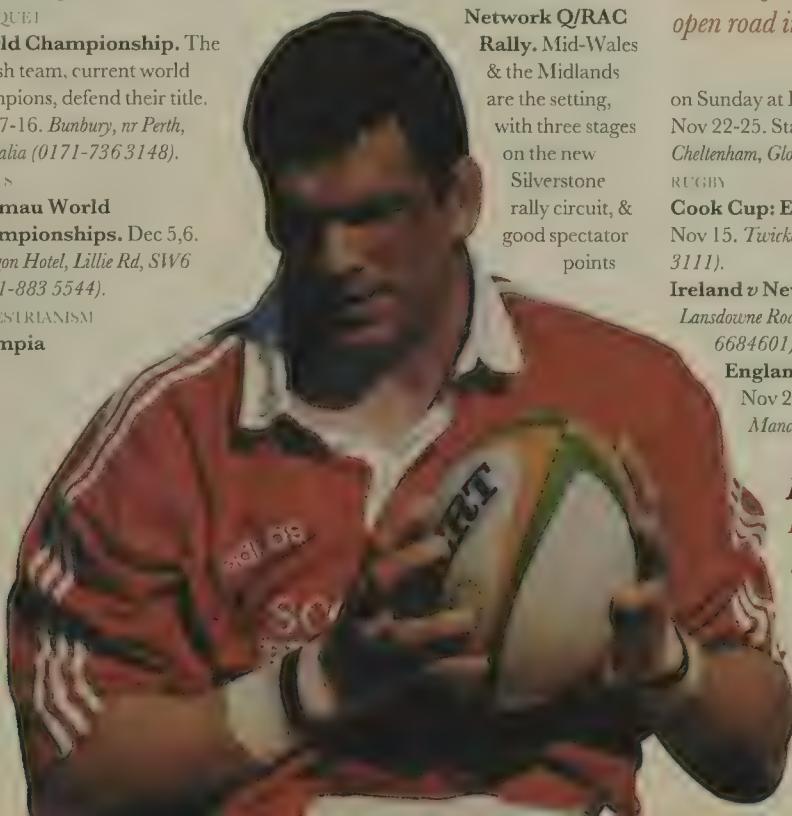
RUGBY

Cook Cup: England v Australia. Nov 15, Twickenham, Middx (0181-744 3111).

Ireland v New Zealand. Nov 15, Lansdowne Road, Dublin (00 353 1 6684601).

England v New Zealand. Nov 22, Old Trafford, Manchester (0161-872 1661).

Rugby: British Lion Martin Johnson will be setting the turf alight at Twickenham.



Cliff Richard Pro-Celebrity event. Kevin Keegan, Rolf Harris & Sir Cliff himself play alongside professionals in aid of charity. Dec 20, National Indoor Arena, Birmingham (0121-200 2222).

ANGELA BIRD

Scotland v Australia. Nov 22, Murrayfield, Edinburgh (0131-346 5000).

England v South Africa. England meet the current world champions. Nov 29, Twickenham.

Wales v New Zealand. Nov 29, Cardiff Arms Park, Cardiff (01222 390111).

England v New Zealand. Dec 6, Twickenham.

Scotland v South Africa. Dec 6, Murrayfield.

SWIMMING

British Grand Prix. Nov 14-16, St Margaret's Pool, Leicester (0116-233 3090).

British Championships. The last chance for swimmers to qualify for next year's world championships in Australia. Dec 11-14, Ponds Forge International Sports Centre, Sheffield (0114-276 2350).

TENNIS

Guardian Direct National Championships. Nov 11-16, Telford International Centre, Telford, Salop (01952 291919).

★ HIGHLIGHT ★

Honda Challenge for the ATP Senior Tour of Champions. Borg, McEnroe, Cash, Vilas, Henman, Rusedski & more. Dec 4-7, Royal Albert Hall, Kensington Gore, SW7 (0171-589 8212). See box, above.

Cliff Richard Pro-Celebrity event. Kevin Keegan, Rolf Harris & Sir Cliff himself play alongside professionals in aid of charity. Dec 20, National Indoor Arena, Birmingham (0121-200 2222).

ANGELA BIRD



Glass act: exhibits on show at the Fine Arts and Antiques Fair at Olympia.

OTHER EVENTS

Christmas in the capital means carols around the tree in Trafalgar Square, but this year Londoners looking for a change can find events with a Swedish flavour at the V&A. Dealers at the Olympia Fine Arts & Antiques Fair show beautiful genuine pieces, while Bonhams offers a chance to acquire some frankly fake Old Masters. Horses display classical training at Wembley, while some well-disciplined dogs put in an appearance at Earls Court.



Fine Art & Antiques Fair. More than 200 leading antique dealers from throughout Europe offer exquisite furniture & works of art. The centrepiece is "A Scot's Trinity", a loan exhibition of Jacobean glass, portraits of the Erskine family, & thrones dating from the 15th to 17th centuries. Nov 17-23. Mon 5-10pm; Tues 11am-9pm; Wed-Fri 11am-8pm; Sat 11am-7pm; Sun 11am-5pm. Olympia, Hammersmith Rd, W14 (0171-370 8234).

Spanish Riding School of Vienna. The controlled performance of the white Lipizzaner stallions & their riders is somewhere between dressage & an equestrian ballet. On this tour, spectators will also see mares & foals from the Piber stud in south Austria frolicking to music from the trumpeters of the Household Cavalry & the Band of the Blues & Royals. Nov 20-23. Thurs-Sat 8pm; Sun 3pm. Wembley Arena, Empire Way, Wembley, Middx (0181-900 1234).

Opening of Humanities Reading Room. A sneak preview of the long-awaited new British Library building (which opens officially in summer, 1998) that offers a chance to compare the airy St Pancras reading room with its circular predecessor in Bloomsbury.

Discover Dogs: Find the perfect four-legged friend.



ARTS AND CRAFTS AT PEACOCK HOUSE

The house that John Betjeman described as having "one of the most distinguished & cheerful & thoughtfully coloured interiors in England" is the venue for a Christmas Craft Fair in December. A range of top-quality craft items —jewellery, ceramics, knitwear, leather goods, stained glass and even kites—will be on sale in Peacock House, near Holland Park.

Built in 1906 for Sir Ernest Debenham of Debenham & Freebody's, London's first department store, this finely decorated

Edwardian house contains many beautiful tiles by William De Morgan and a gilded mosaic cupola in the hall designed by Gaetano Meo. Originally known as Debenham House, it acquired the name Peacock House because of the tiles depicting peacocks which can be seen throughout the building.

An added attraction of the sale, held in aid of the Richmond Fellowship for community mental health, is the opportunity to explore the interior of this richly decorated Arts & Crafts house. Christmas Craft Fair, Dec 6, 7, 10am-5pm. Peacock House, 8 Addison Rd, W14 (0171-274 3013).

and mother of pearl; the walnut panelling throughout, the enamel-inlaid door handles, scratchplates and light switches; and hand-crafted mouldings of grapes, oak leaves and Tudor roses.

A

n

the main feature of the drawing room is a magnificent mantelpiece with De Morgan tiles depicting fish. Other details are the mahogany bookcases inlaid with pansies, lilies, butterflies and angel wings in ivory



work. Nov 29, 30, 10am-6pm. Earls Court 2, SW5 (0171-493 7838).

Paintings from the Studio of Miguel Canals. A chance to pick up anything from a "Rembrandt" to a "Monet"—copies from the studio of the late Miguel Canals. Prices start at £100. Dec 2, 2pm. Bonhams Chelsea, Lots Rd, SW10 (0171-393 3900).

Discover Dogs. More than 160 breeds of pedigree dog on view, plus demonstrations of dog agility & police

• HIGHLIGHT •

Swedish Christmas at the V&A. Special events in connection with the current Swedish style exhibition include cookery demonstrations (Dec 3, 12, 13; booking essential), Christmas decoration family workshop (Dec 6, booking essential), & a traditional Santa Lucia procession (Dec 13, 3pm). See box, page 75. Victoria & Albert Museum, Cromwell Rd, SW7 (0171-938 8407).



REVIVING LONDON'S FROST FAIR

Until the Victorians straightened and narrowed the Thames, the wide, shallow river used to wind sluggishly through the capital, its slow-moving waters regularly freezing over in winter. The inhabitants of London were quick to take advantage of this wintry phenomenon; hawkers, entertainers and stallholders set up Frost Fairs that drew the city's population onto the ice in huge numbers.

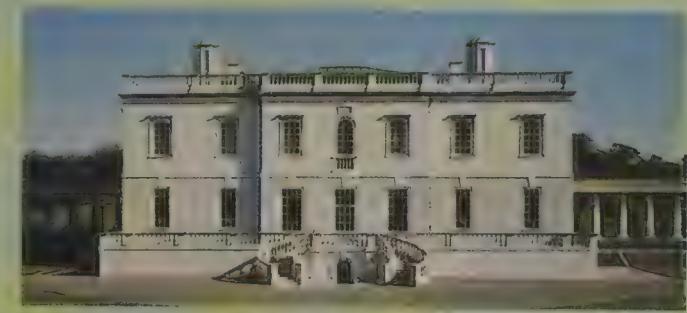
The National Maritime Museum has recently decided to revive the Frost Fair—in name and spirit, if not exactly in location. The 1990s version is held at the Queen's House, Greenwich, the pretty residence designed by Inigo Jones in 1616 for Anne of Denmark, wife of King James I. Echoing the building's

ancestry, costumed craftspeople will be selling pewterware, replica period costumes, wooden boxes, candlesticks and other gift items.

Costumed interpreters will recall the days when the dowager Queen Henrietta Maria returned to live in the house with her son Charles II, after the Restoration. Families will be welcomed to a Court Masque and

taught the steps of 17th-century dances in the Great Hall. Children will be put to work making fairings, masks and "kissing boughs", and a troop of mummers will perform a traditional play. Frost Fair, Dec 6, 7, 11am-1pm & 2-6pm. Queen's House, Greenwich, SE10 (0181-858 4422).

ANGELA BIRD



illumination continues daily until Jan 6. Trafalgar Sq, WC2 (0171-211 6393).

Christmas Craft Fair/The Festive Table. Some 350 craftsmen demonstrate & sell their creations, & give workshops & seminars. The second show offers high-quality food & drink with a seasonal flavour, Dec 5-7.

10.30am-5.30pm. Alexandra Palace, N22 (0173 833884). **Feast at the National Gallery.** Family Christmas activities include an amusing

quiz trail on the subject of food, that encourages children to pay close attention to a dozen of the gallery's paintings. From Dec 20. Mon-Sat 10am-6pm; Wed until 8pm; Sun noon-6pm. National Gallery, Trafalgar Sq, WC2 (0171-747 2885).

Frost Fair. Echoing the old-time fairs that used to be held on the frozen waters of the Thames, this new event will celebrate the arrival of winter with a Court Masque, 17th-century craft demonstrations, & a market with pewter, leather & other traditional materials. Dec 6, 7, 11am-1pm, 2-4pm. Queen's House, Greenwich, SE10 (0181-312 6647). See box, above.

Carols by Candlelight. Join in the singing in the elegant setting of the Great Conservatory, built by Charles Fowler in the 1820s & illuminated for this occasion by myriad flickering flames. Collection in aid of a local children's hospice. Dec 14. 4.30pm. Syon Park, Brentford, Middx (0181-560 0881).

Sale of Toy Soldiers. Part of an army of figures from the Forbes Museum of Military Miniatures, in Tangier (some will be sold at Christie's in New York on Dec 11) is this toy figure collection numbering some 60,000 pieces, marshalled by the late Malcolm S. Forbes. Dec 17, 18. 10.30am & 2pm. Christie's South Kensington, Old Brompton Rd, SW7 (0171-581 7611).

National Trust Walks. Recover from Christmas on a guided, two-hour perambulation around interesting & historic areas of London. Dec 27, meet at noon in the yard of the George Inn, 77 Borough High St, SE1. Dec 30, meet at 10.30am in the courtyard of Carlyle's House, 24 Cheyne Row, SW3

30 January 10 1997 31 Judas Maccabeus 32 Nine including the *homeward-bound* 33 Aberdeen 34 Thores and Ingvar men 35 The pampers in the workhouse 36 St Stephen's Day is St Stephen's Day, not the same St Stephen, but the first king of Hungary, 975-1038; Parliament is sometimes still called "St Stephen's" because of its destruction by fire in 1834



In excelsis Deo: Carols round the tree in Trafalgar Square, from December 1.

5HL (places must be pre-booked in writing, enclosing a cheque for £2 made out to the National Trust).

INTERNATIONAL MODEL SHOW & MODEL ENGINEER EXHIBITION.

Plenty of hands-on experience for children at the model-car racing track & the boat pool. Other features of this popular family event include an indoor flying area for model planes, plus kits, military models, & plenty of one-off creations—including a one-quarter scale Ferrari that is correct to the last detail. Dec 30-Jan 4. Tues-Sat 9.30am-6pm; Sun 9.30am-5.30pm. Olympia, W14 (01442 665514).

Ice Adventures. Jayne Torvill & Christopher Dean bring their brand of perfection to London in a new ice show, with an international troupe of skaters. Dec 30, Jan 1-4. Tues, Thurs, Fri, Sun 7.30pm; Sat 2pm & 7.30pm. Wembley Arena (0181-900 123). ANGELA BIRD

Chilly thrills: Torvill and Dean will be getting their skates on at Wembley Arena.



Equestrian ballet: Superb control from the Lipizzaner stallions of the Spanish Riding School.
Copy cat: After Degas, far left, by Miguel Canals at Bonhams Chelsea.

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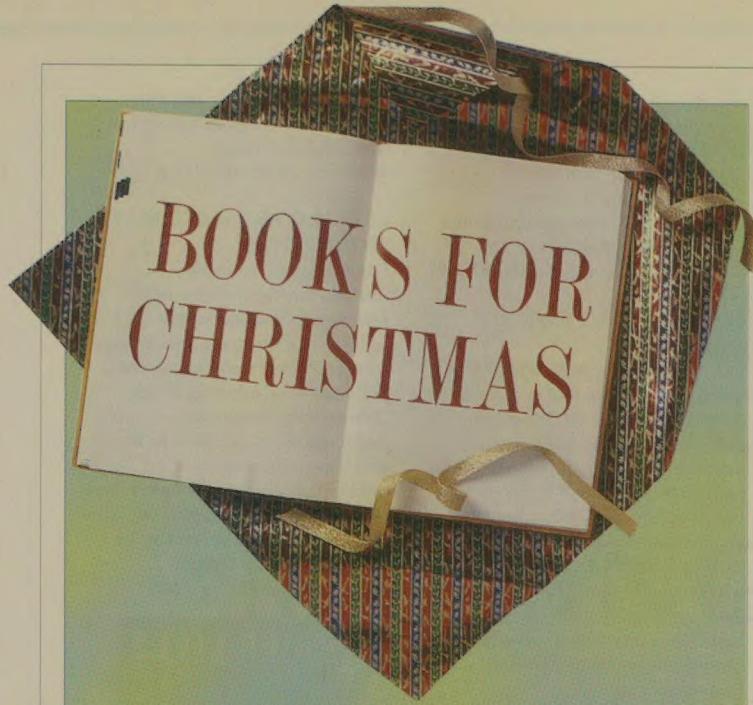
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The Good Book Guide makes a seasonal selection especially for *ILN* readers.

In the 20 years since its founding, *The Good Book Guide* has directed readers through the mass of more than 100,000 new books published every year. Nearly a quarter of a million readers now rely on this monthly magazine to sift through and provide an informed opinion on everything from biographies to novels, how-to manuals to cookbooks, videos to CD-Roms. Their choice is then swiftly dispatched to them through the post.

A unique concept in the literary world, the *Guide* asks its reviewers to vet thousands of books each month, then recommend the best under clear categories such as crime, essays and history. The publication also includes features by leading writers, which might be anything from a profile of a fellow author to a round-up of books most enjoyed over recent years. Bill Bryson, Joanna Trollope and Keith Waterhouse are among those who have aired their views in its pages.

THE OXFORD COMPANION TO BRITISH HISTORY

Edited by John Cannon

From Abbeys to the battle of Zutphen (1586), this new (autumn 1997) *Oxford Companion* covers the people and events that have shaped British history, politics, society and culture over 2,000 years. More than 4,000 alphabetical entries, by 100 distinguished contributors, provide an authoritative, comprehensive and highly enjoyable overview.

OUP 1,056pp SYH411 £30



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S LAST WILD PLACES

This is a wide-ranging book, spanning all seven continents and describing some of the remotest regions on

Earth. Written by six knowledgeable authors and illustrated with more than 200 colour photographs by some outstanding wildlife and landscape photographers.

National Geographic 272pp SYH303 £24.95

MASTERPIECES OF WESTERN ART: A HISTORY OF ART IN 900 INDIVIDUAL STUDIES

Edited by Ingo F Walther

These two volumes are a splendid, immaculately produced celebration of artistic achievement, taking us from the 13th century to the 1990s. The focus is the paintings themselves, more than 900 of them, reproduced in full colour and accessibly described. An introduction at the beginning of each chapter—the twin volumes are themselves divided into 10 sections—outlines the background to each period, detailing the outstanding works of its foremost artists and their stylistic innovations. This is followed by a presentation of the artists' key works, each beautifully illustrated and carefully explained. The result is, in many ways, an "imaginary museum of western painting", indeed the "ideal museum"! The book is informative,

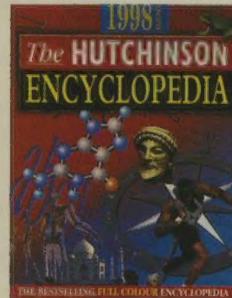
its breadth of coverage is comprehensive, it is a delight to read or simply browse through.

Benedikt Taschen 2 vols SYH263 £49.99

THE HUTCHINSON ENCYCLOPEDIA 1998: 11TH EDITION

A new edition of the outstanding one-volume A-Z encyclopedia, redesigned, and in full colour, marks the 50th anniversary of its first edition, and is updated to May 1997. It has Tony Blair as British prime minister, and records the new UK cabinet ministers, for example. There are 1.5 million words, 26,000 entries (of which 7,500 are biographies), 50 maps, and more than 2,000 illustrations. The alphabetical entries are complemented by colour information boxes on a wide range of topics and a comprehensive system of cross-references to related subjects.

Helicon 1,200pp SYH407 £40



FROM THE HOLY MOUNTAIN: A JOURNEY IN THE SHADOW OF BYZANTIUM

William Dalrymple

This wonderful travel writer and archaeological sleuth describes the last rites of Christendom in a journey through its beleaguered outposts in the Middle East. He follows in the footsteps of John Moschos, a monk who in AD615 wrote about his travels in the Byzantine world at a time when the empire was being assailed from all sides. Dalrymple, too, had his fair share of run-ins with a rogues' gallery, from Turkish secret policemen and Lebanese warlords to Egyptian Islamic fundamentalists. There are lighter touches, too, including a wonderful description of the "inexhaustibly lewd and lustful" Empress Theodora in Constantinople.

HarperCollins 352pp SYH398 £18

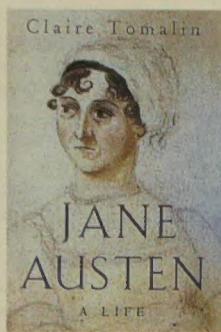
REAL COOKING: A NEW APPROACH FOR THE HOME COOK

Nigel Slater

"There is too much talk of cooking being an art or a science—we are only making ourselves something to eat." Nigel Slater's no-nonsense approach reflects his irreverent attitude to food, yet his new book is full of superb, straightforward recipes that warm, satisfy and please. Real cooking in Slater's view is easy—it involves using good, fresh ingredients and understanding the little details (like ripe, luscious tomatoes, extra virgin olive oil and fresh basil) that turn a simple supper into something memorable. Slater's earlier books,

including *Real Fast Food*, are already kitchen classics; this new one is even better. The design and photography are superb too.

Michal Joseph 288pp SYH401 £18.99



JANE AUSTEN: A LIFE

Claire Tomalin

One of the best contemporary biographers has written a wonderfully rich and lively book. Austen's letters (those not wilfully destroyed) reveal as much by what they omit as what they contain, and Tomalin is specially insightful here, reflecting perceptively on the gaps. Her speculations about Austen's political and social attitudes are equally intelligent—and where she cannot know, she leaves well alone (as with the mystery lover Austen is supposed to have taken at Lyme Regis). Tomalin's clear affection for Austen shines from every page, but she does not allow it to impede good sense or the clarity of her view. She paints a lively picture of Austen's family and friends (and is specially good on her closest relationships, with her mother and her sister Cassandra). Not only one of the best of the literally hundreds of books on Austen written during the last half-century, it is one of the best biographies of recent years.

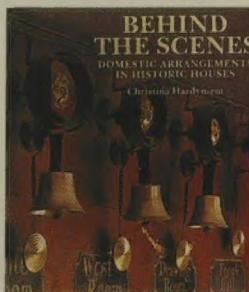
Viking 320pp SYH402 £20

BEHIND THE SCENES: DOMESTIC ARRANGEMENTS IN HISTORIC HOUSES

Christina Hardyment

Hardyment has provided an enlightening exploration of the history of housekeeping. From great houses and castles to town houses and farmhouses, with the help of archives, oral memories and photographs, she has unearthed many fascinating facts. For example, frozen food is nothing new: food was preserved in ice-houses—brick-lined conical pits—dating from 1633 at Felbrigg Hall in Norfolk. Hardyment's domestic archaeology is informative, enjoyable and beautifully illustrated.

National Trust 256pp SYH412 £24.99



HIROSHIGE: PRINTS AND DRAWINGS

Michael Foster

Catalogue of an exhibition at the Royal Academy, London, with every work reproduced in colour, plus three short essays, a chronology and glossary. Like Hokusai, that other great and prolific woodblock artist of the early-19th century, Hiroshige produced a series of well-known sights, but temperamentally they are very different. The mood of Hiroshige's pictures is always lonely, whether they show landscapes with figures (the most frequent), landscapes without figures, city streets, night scenes, mist, snow or rain. Only occasionally does the moon come out and illuminate a few boats, a waterfall or a bridge. Anyone who has seen the exhibition will want to own this book, no question; for those unfortunate enough to miss it, the book offers lasting consolation.

Presel Verlag 256pp SYH406 £39.95

VIRTUAL HISTORY: ALTERNATIVES AND COUNTERFACTUALS

Edited by Niall Ferguson

Nine leading historians reject the traditional deterministic methods of studying history and apply counterfactual arguments to critical moments. What if Charles I had avoided the Civil War? What if Britain had stood aside in 1914? What if communism had not collapsed in 1989?

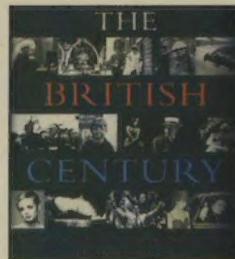
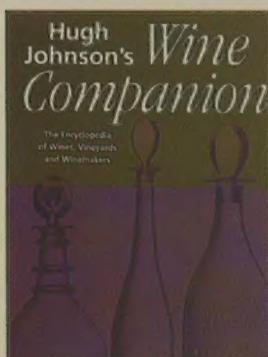
Picador 548pp SYH399 £20

HUGH JOHNSON'S WINE COMPANION: 4TH EDITION

This is the definitive encyclopedia of the world's vineyards and wine makers, by the doyen of the wine business. In this revised, 1997, edition of the wine "bible", you can travel to the vineyards of France, New Zealand, Bulgaria and more. With over 7,500 detailed profiles of châteaux, estates and negotiants, Hugh Johnson's authoritative work of scholarship is a must for everyone who enjoys wine.

The book is lavishly illustrated throughout and also contains excellent sections describing how wine is actually made, and the grape types used, as well as providing information on how best to store your precious bottles, and when to drink them. A vintage companion well worth savoring.

Mitchell Beazley 592pp SYH282 £30

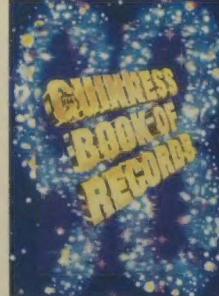


THE BRITISH CENTURY: A PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS

Brian Moynahan

As *The British Century* opens, Queen Victoria is on the throne and one in four of all living people are her subjects; at its close, Britain has been transformed from global superpower to global entertainer, a place of rock stars and royal soap opera. Moynahan, previously European editor of *The Sunday Times*, has combined an incisive historical text with the formidable talents of Annabel Merullo and Sarah Jackson, the outstanding photographic, editorial team who put together *The Russian Century* and *The Chinese Century*. The result is an exhilarating book which any reader will want to turn to again and again, an absolute treasure trove of fantastically memorable images—comic, shocking, nostalgic, beautiful and moving.

Weidenfeld 304pp SYH403 £30



THE GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS 1998

This is the latest, 44th, edition of the old favourite—the annual book to settle all arguments, with records of the biggest, rarest, smallest, oldest, longest, highest and heaviest of virtually everything—jam-packed with useless and intriguing facts. Copiously illustrated and full of fun.

Guinness 352pp SYH235 £17

MIRA CALLIGRAPHIAE MONUMENTA

Inscribed by Georg Bocskay and Illuminated by Joris Hoefnagel

This gorgeous illuminated manuscript is both visually and intellectually fascinating. Created by the master calligrapher Georg Bocskay to demonstrate his superiority among scribes, it was embellished years later by Europe's last great illuminator, Joris Hoefnagel. Hoefnagel's imagery bears witness to his beliefs that nature is the gateway to true knowledge and that the picture is the master of the word. Winged insects dart among the letters, the pages are ripe with

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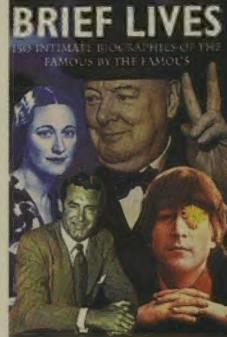
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